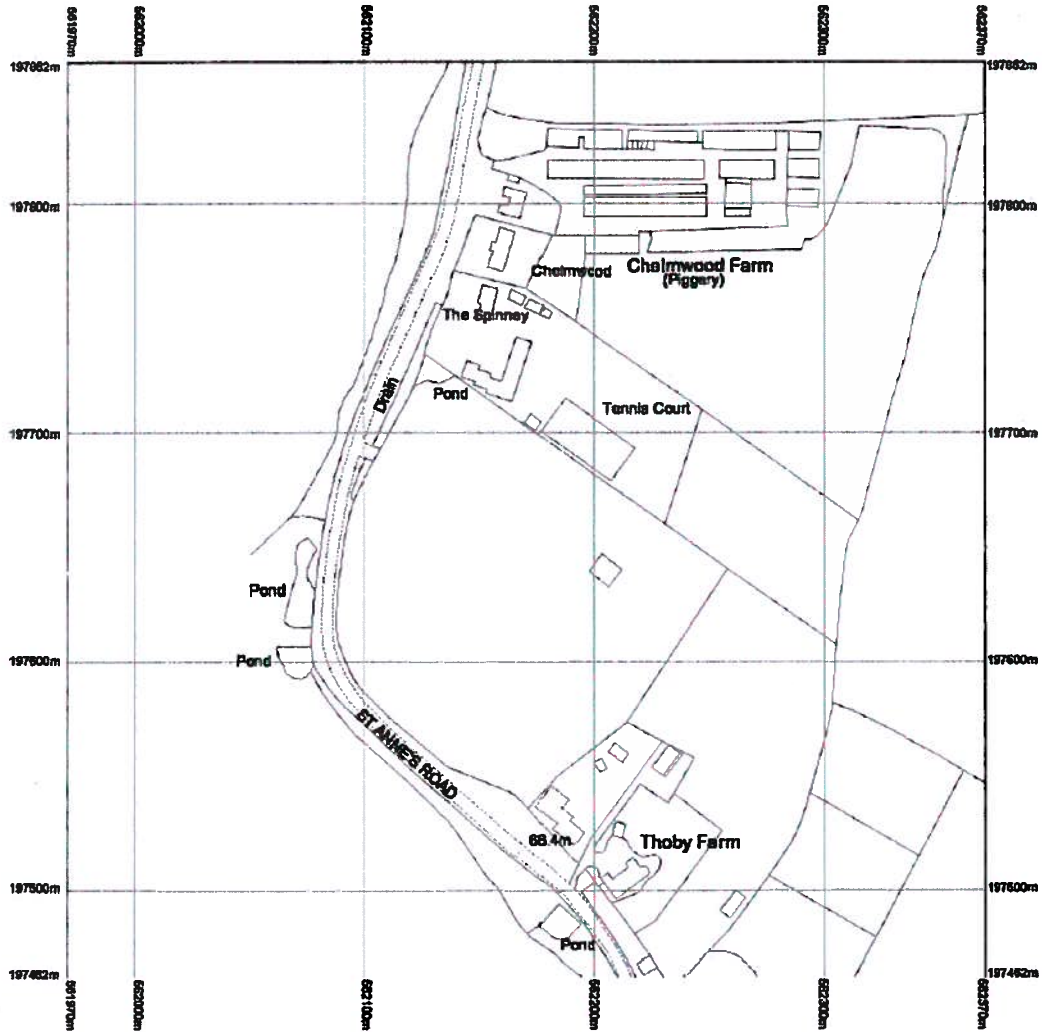


# Alternative Site for Proposed Affordable Housing on Land at St. Anne's Road, Mountnessing, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 0TX



July 2013

## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

PERSONAL DETAILS REMOVED

## Introduction

This report investigates the need for affordable homes in the Brentwood area and demonstrates the lands suitability for inclusion in the new Local Development Plan (LDP). It is a consolidation of information from Government and local sources openly acquired.

The document also outlines the design rationale for the proposal of an affordable rural housing scheme located within the settlement of Mountnessing. By incorporating within the design, the items noted in this report, the dwellings proposed will provide a visually attractive addition to the street scene and will enable much needed homes to be constructed that will work well for the occupants.

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## The Need For Affordable Homes

### 1.1 Brentwood Council Housing Strategy Statement

In September 2010 the Brentwood Council published a **Housing Strategy Statement**<sup>[01]</sup>, below are extracts from the statement that outlines the Councils commitment to providing affordable housing.

#### **Background**

*28. In November/December 2009, the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership jointly consulted on issues and options facing the Borough up to 2031, including spatial options on the geographic distribution of growth across the Borough. The most popular options were centralising growth around Brentwood, followed by focusing growth on settlements in the main transport corridors.*

*29. The issues and options consultation was required to take into account housing targets set out in The East of England Plan. This stipulated that Brentwood must find land to accommodate around 170 dwellings per year up until 2031. The Secretary of State has since abolished the Regional Spatial Strategy and the associated housing targets and advised that it is for individual local authorities to determine the number and location of new homes in their area. The expected basis for this is likely to be a combination of evidence, community aspirations and wider policy objectives.*

#### **The Borough's Housing Needs**

*36. Brentwood's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (January 2010) provides evidence on the level of need in the Borough. This shows that Brentwood's housing requirement to 2026 is split 29.6% Social Rent, 65.5% Intermediate (rent/shared ownership etc.) and 4.9% Market, with 58.6% smaller units (1 and 2 bedrooms) and 41.4% larger units(3 or more bedrooms).*

*37. This is a reflection of meeting the total affordable need from the planned increase in housing supply, based at the time of the study on the East of England Plan housing target. In practice, such a proportion of affordable housing would not be viable without significant Government subsidy that simply would not be forthcoming.*

*38. 2,583 households are registered with the Council as being in housing need. Of these, 286 are the Council's tenants who require a transfer, and 2,297 are registered on the Council's housing register, not yet having been housed in Council homes.*

#### **Delivering new market and new affordable housing**

*42. We will continue to seek to maximise actual delivery of new housing (including affordable homes for those householders unable to buy or rent in the private market and specialist housing for residents with support needs) in the Borough, and the pipeline of potential future delivery, particularly through using planning housing policy to contribute to meeting housing need.*

*43. In order to "balance" the need against site economics, will undertake a viability study to inform better our review of current affordable housing polices, particularly in terms of the respective proportions of market, intermediate and social rent.*

*44. We will seek to establish an agreed investment partnership with the Homes & Communities Agency to assist integrated approach to the delivery of housing and infrastructure investment if appropriate.*

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45. *We will address opportunities for delivery of new housing through our emerging asset management strategy.*

46. *We will continue to foster partnership arrangements with registered social landlords to deliver affordable housing.*

### 1.2 £14 Million Boost for Brentwood Housing

On 7<sup>th</sup> October 2010, '**This is Essex**'<sup>[02]</sup> reported a pledge from the **Homes and communities Agency** for £14m to boost housing in Brentwood, below are extracts from the article, a full page version is available to view in *Appendix A*.

*Almost 300 people will get affordable housing in Brentwood thanks to millions of pounds pledged from the national housing and regeneration agency for England.*

*Of the 390 new homes to be started this financial year in Essex, 72 will be in Brentwood, providing affordable homes for 295 people.*

*Brentwood house prices are booming but the high cost of mortgages in the town are leaving many young people unable to live in the town they grew up in.*

*"The £14million over the next three years will enable new homes to be built which in turn will address the local housing needs of Essex."*

### 1.3 Understanding Housing Needs<sup>[03]</sup>

#### **Key Findings – Future Needs**

*The number of households in the Borough is projected to rise by 22% between 2011 and 2031; 50% of this increase is accounted for by one person households*

*Housing requirements based on long term trends show that to meet needs almost two thirds of new housing should be for intermediate housing, e.g. shared ownership whereby an occupier part owns and part rents, and just under a third for social rented. There will continue to be a demand for new market housing (housing sold or rented at full market value) which will need to be built in order to deliver affordable housing*

*Half of new housing should be 1 or 2 bedroom homes providing for older person households, single parents, childless couples and single people (predominantly in affordable tenures) There is likely to be a long term shift away from home ownership to private renting*

#### **Residential Development Viability**

*A study on the economics of providing affordable housing considers future residential site viability. It recommends that on sites above 15 dwellings a Borough-wide affordable housing target of 35% remains appropriate, based on a higher proportion of intermediate, rather than social rented tenures. On smaller sites of five or more dwellings a maximum of 30% is more achievable, particularly at lower densities.*

#### **Future Housing Numbers**

*The East of England Plan requires 3,500 additional dwellings in the Borough between 2001 and 2021. A review in March 2010 proposed a similar requirement of 170 dwellings a year (3,400 dwellings between 2011 and 2031). The Government intends to abolish regional targets leaving it up to local authorities to determine*

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*housing numbers in light of evidence, including local aspirations, on the number and kind of homes needed and that should be built.*

### 1.4 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)<sup>[04]</sup>

*The primary role of the SHLAA is to identify sites with potential for housing in the Borough. Identification of land as having potential for housing does not mean that the land will be allocated or granted planning permission. The SHLAA provides independent evidence to support future plan-making, it is not a statement of Council policy. A public "call for sites" to be considered under the SHLAA process was undertaken in December 2009. Further updates will be carried out as necessary through the annual monitoring process.*

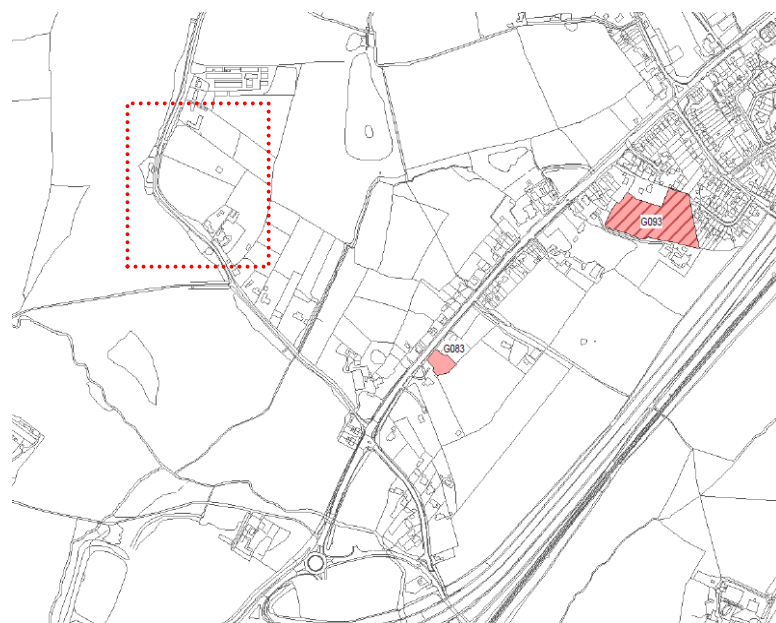


fig1

SHLAA Final Report Map 2011<sup>[05]</sup>, see figure 1 - Brentwood Borough North East, indicating the areas within Mountnessing already identified as potential building areas. It also identifies the location of the plot proposed for the affordable homes project.

#### KEY

-  Greenfield - Potential
-  Greenfield - Discounted
-  Brownfield - Potential
-  Brownfield - Discounted
-  Location of Proposed Affordable Homes

### 1.5 Heart of Essex Housing Economic Futures Study Final Report June 2012<sup>[06]</sup>

*3.22 Analysis of labour market indicators that average wages received by Brentwood Borough residents are significantly above regional and national averages, at £708 per week (this compares with £529 across the East of England and £503 across Great Britain). This implies significant levels of out-commuting from Brentwood to high skilled, high paid jobs. By contrast, the average weekly wage of those who work in Brentwood is £564, 20 per cent lower than that earned by residents.*

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3.23 At £321,750, the average house price in Brentwood is the highest within Essex (with the exception of Epping Forest).<sup>21</sup> While this reflects high resident earnings, it is also likely to make housing unaffordable to other lower skilled, lower paid residents.

### 1.6 Brentwood Council - Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)

Below are extracts from the latest AMR<sup>[07]</sup>, from Brentwood Council published in December 2012 and agreed by the Council in March 2013, covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.

#### Affordable Housing

5.48 Affordable Housing is a significant issue within the Borough with house prices significantly higher than average prices for England. Whilst local wages are above the national average, house prices and rental levels are well above what many households can afford.

5.49 The Council has undertaken a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), with five other Essex and Hertfordshire London Commuter Belt authorities. This report, completed in January 2010, reinforces the importance of affordable housing provision. It concludes that in order to meet needs over the period 2007 to 2026, 29.6% of new housing would need to be social rented and 65.5% intermediate, leaving only 4.9% market housing. In reality demand for market housing will continue and development viability would preclude this proportion of affordable housing provision. However, the SHMA, alongside other evidence, will inform the review of the Council's affordable housing policies.

5.50 Affordable housing supply through new build is severely constrained by the Borough's Green Belt location, restricted supply of development land and lack of development finance and public subsidy. In addition, much of Brentwood's housing is provided on small sites below adopted thresholds set out in Policy H9 of the RLP (20 units and above or 0.66 hectares or more within the Brentwood Urban Area and 5 units and above or 0.16 hectares or more within defined settlements elsewhere in the Borough).

5.51 The supply of affordable housing is variable from one year to another, as shown in Table 8. A gross total of 51 affordable housing completions took place in the monitoring year, all from redevelopment of the former Highwood Hospital Site, Ongar Road, Brentwood. This contributes to 34.5% of all homes completed in 2011/12 above the Borough's average for the past 10 years. Large development sites are limited in Brentwood, but sites such as Highwood and the former Highwood Hospital continue to bring forward significant numbers.

<b>Table 8: Affordable housing completions 2001 to 2012 Year</b>	<b>Number of Affordable Housing Completions</b>	<b>% of Total Permanent Housing Completions</b>
<b>2011/12</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>34.5%</b>
2010/11	4	1.0%
2009/10	67	35.6%
2008/09	78	27.4%
2007/08	82	34.0%
2006/07	39	17.9%
2005/06	21	18.1%
2004/05	2	1.3%
2003/04	0	0.0%
2002/03	14	5.3%
2001/02	81	44.8%

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## 1.7 Government Statistical Data Set

The chart below is an extract from the **Government website of statistical data for affordable housing**<sup>[08]</sup>. The report is overdue for updating, but at the time of data collection, It is clear to see from the report that Brentwood Council has not developed any sites to accommodate the housing needs in the area.

### Live Table 1011: Additional Affordable Housing Supply 2011/12; detailed breakdown by Local Authority

		ONS Code:	22UD
Type of unit:	Data Source	<b>Brentwood</b>	
<b>Social Rent, of which:</b>			
New Build			
HCA with grant	HCA IMS		0
LA New Build	HCA IMS/LAHS		0
of which grant funded by HCA	HCA IMS		0
PFI	HCA		0
S106 nil grant (see note)	HCA IMS		0
S106 nil grant total			0
Other (see note)	LAHS		0
Acquisitions			
with HCA grant	HCA IMS		0
without HCA grant	LAHS		0
<b>Total Social Rent</b>			<b>0</b>
<b>Low Cost Home Ownership, of which:</b>			
New Build			
HCA with grant	HCA IMS		0
FTBi & LWI	HCA PCS		0
S106 nil grant (see note)	HCA IMS		0
	LAHS		0
S106 nil grant total			0
Other (see note)	LAHS		0
Acquisitions			
with HCA grant	HCA IMS		0
without HCA grant	LAHS		0
Assisted Purchase			
RTA & SHB (RSL)	HCA IMS		0
SHB (LA)	LAHS		0
CIS	LAHS		0
<b>Total LCHO</b>			<b>0</b>
Intermediate Rent			
New Build			
with HCA grant	HCA IMS		0
without HCA grant	LAHS		0
Acquisitions			
with HCA grant	HCA IMS		0
without HCA grant	LAHS		0
<b>Total LCHO and Intermediate Rent</b>			<b>0</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>0</b>



## 1.8 Brentwood Gazette - Shortage of Affordable Homes in Brentwood

In January 2013 the **Brentwood Gazette**<sup>[99]</sup> run a story identifying the shortage of affordable homes around the Brentwood area, below are extracts from the article, a full page version is available to view in *Appendix B*.

*The number of people waiting for a council house in Brentwood grew approximately ten times faster than the national average.....*

*Figures from Brentwood Borough Council show that the waiting list rocketed from 777 in April 2004 to 2,514 in April 2011 – an increase of 223 per cent....*

*During the same period, the average for England rose by 28 per cent to 1.84 million, according to the homeless charity Shelter...*

*Between April 2011 and April 2012, the council's waiting list increased further, from 2,514 to 3,054....*

## 1.9 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Brentwood Local Plan Scoping Report<sup>[10]</sup>

### **Current baseline in Brentwood**

9.2.3 *Housing affordability is a major issue in Brentwood. Whilst local income levels are higher than the UK average, house prices too are significantly higher than the average prices for England. As a result, for many households, property costs and rental levels are unaffordable.*

9.2.4 *Housing completions in Brentwood for the period from 2001 to 2011 exceeded the rate that was required by the Regional Spatial Strategy (now revoked). By April 2012 a total of 2,321 homes were completed in the Borough compared to 1,925 RSS target (2001-2012). In 2011/12 housing completions totalled 132 (net). Fig 2 shows a levelling off in projected housing completions 2012-2017; however, it is considered likely that more housing than currently projected will come forward as a result of sites being identified and windfall housing delivery.<sup>137</sup>*

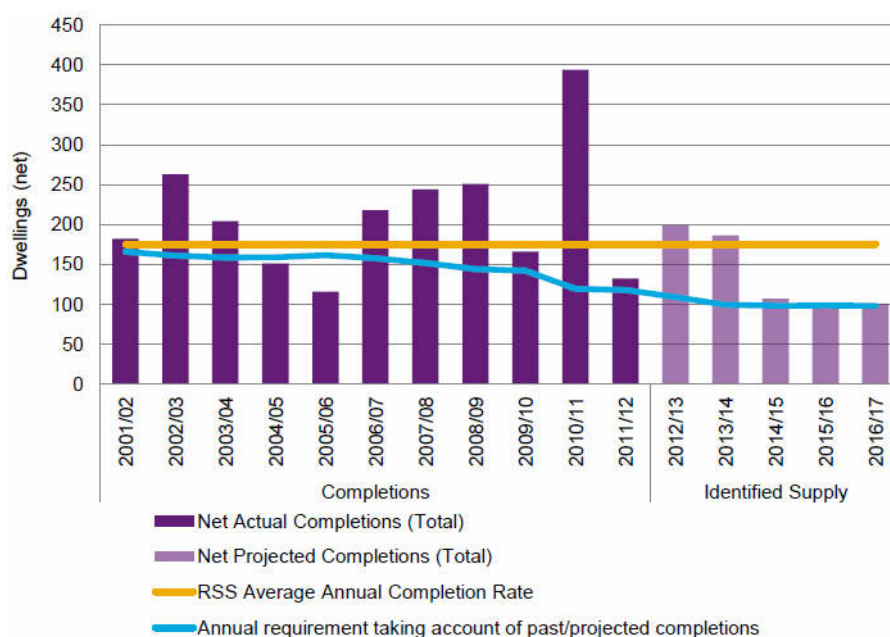


fig 2

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*In terms of the type of housing that is required, the 2008 London Commuter Belt (East)/M11 Sub-Region Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) found that of a total housing requirement of 3,200, intermediate affordable housing should make up the greatest proportion, numbering 2,100 (65.5%); social rented housing should form the next largest segment of the tenure mix, at 1,000 (29.6%); and additional market housing should number just 200 (4.9%).<sup>139</sup>*

*9.2.6 The supply of affordable housing in the Borough is variable from one year to another. For example, in 2011/12, a total of 51 affordable homes were completed, representing 34.5% of all completions; meanwhile, in 2010/11 just four were completed, representing 1%. Between 2001/02 and 2011/12 affordable housing completions made up an average of 24.2% of all completions.<sup>140</sup>*

*9.2.7 Of the existing housing stock in Brentwood, one and two bedroom properties make up a relatively small proportion of the total. In the context of longer life expectancy, more household break ups and a growing proportion of young people choosing to live alone, the lack of one and two bedroom properties affects affordability and choice of housing. This can result in the loss of young, economically active, elements of the population and an imbalance in the population structure over the long term. In light of this issue, there has been a continuing downward trend in the number and proportion of 3+ bedroom dwelling completions since 2001. In 2010/11, of the 394 housing completions that year, 327 dwellings were one or two bedroom dwellings representing 83% of the total.<sup>141</sup> It should also be noted that current welfare reforms may drive increased demand for smaller properties.<sup>142</sup>*

*9.3 What are the key issues that should be a focus of SA?*

- Housing affordability is a significant issue for many in Brentwood and demand for affordable housing is likely to continue to rise; as such there is a need to increase delivery of affordable and intermediate housing.*
- New housing must be of an appropriate size, tenure and design so as to meet the needs of existing and future residents (including the elderly, disabled people and those in poor health) and ensure that people are able to remain in the Borough as their circumstances change.*

### 1.10 POLL: More than 5,000 extra homes needed in Brentwood

On the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013 the **Brentwood Gazette**<sup>[11]</sup> run a story on a poll, commissioned by Brentwood Council and published by Peter Brett Associates identifying the shortage of affordable homes in the Brentwood area, below are extracts from the article, a full page version is available to view in **Appendix C**.

*According to a Poll, nearly 5,500 new homes will need to be built in Brentwood between 2015 and 2030 in order to keep up with population growth, according to a report published this week. The document, compiled by consultants Peter Brett Associates, states that as many as 5,430 properties – 362 a year – will need to be constructed in order to meet the borough's housing needs during this period.*

*Brentwood Borough Council, which commissioned the study, believes that a figure of approximately 3,500 homes (around 233 a year) is more realistic. In support of this figure, the authority released a list of 22 sites across the borough where development could take place... The news comes as the council continues to develop its Local Development Plan (LDP) for 2015 - 2030.*

*As well as housing, the LDP seeks to meet the business and other development needs of the borough to 2030. Brentwood needs extra houses to cater for its rising population, which, according to the latest information*

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*available – the 2011 Census – is now at least 73,600. This was 5,174 (or 7.6 per cent) up on the 2001 Census figure of 68,426.*

*The council adds that it will arrive at this number only after reviewing criteria such as road capacity, the availability of land and the impact on the Green Belt. However, Tory council leader Louise McKinlay said a figure of around 3,500 new homes between 2015 and 2030 was more "deliverable".*

*Councillor Barry Aspinell, the leader of the council's Liberal Democrat opposition group, said: I would like to see affordable housing provided for the villages where the young people have to move out to find somewhere to live."*

*MP Eric Pickles accepted that the requirement for new housing was a "big issue" in the borough and described the construction of 3,500 new homes over 15 years as "well manageable". He added: "That figure would not change the character or nature of Brentwood." The council plans to publish its draft LDP later this summer.*

### 1.11 Brentwood Local Development Plan Newsletter<sup>[12]</sup>

In June 2013, Brentwood Council issued the first of a series of newsletters to all the residents and businesses in the Brentwood Borough. The newsletter was notification of changes in building regional plans and how this would affect future buildings plans in the area. Below are extracts from the article, a full page version is available to view in *Appendix D*.

*changes to the planning system brought in since the Coalition Government took office in 2010. This has included abolishing regional plans and introducing the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).*

*These changes affect how the Council plans for the Borough's future housing requirements, among other things. We now have to identify and seek to meet the housing, business and other development needs of the Borough. For housing, this includes both affordable and market 'objectively assessed' need.*

*To establish how many new homes will need to be built in the Borough, we have commissioned work to identify the Borough's housing need. This will be key evidence to support the emerging Local Development Plan.*

*This work assesses needs based on future population projections. The independent assessment suggests a figure ranging up to 362 new homes per year, which totals 5,430 new homes over the LDP period (2015 to 2030).*

### 1.12 Nick Boles Parliament Keynote Speech<sup>[13]</sup>

Nick Boles said in his Parliament keynote speech: "Housing The Next Generation" that more affordable housing is needed. Below are extracts from the speech, a full page version is available to view in *Appendix E*.

*Shortest of affordable homes: This is a result of our decades-long failure to build enough houses. And the root cause of this is our decades-long refusal to release enough land for development. But, in the long term, the original source of our housing crisis is the failure of past governments to provide enough land for development. As planning minister, it is my job to persuade local authorities to make more land available so that more homes can be built and the price of new homes comes down – and thereby reverse the trend that has been heading in the wrong direction for decades. Now can you understand why I sleep a little uneasily?*

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*In the 1990s, the average person setting aside 5% of their income each week could save up for a deposit on a house after 8 years. Today, it would take the same person 47 years.*

*The answer is simple. We've built too few houses to keep up with the rapid increase in the number of households. I understand why the idea of a lot more house-building makes people nervous. And I certainly don't want to see more open land developed than is absolutely necessary. **But unfortunately there is no painless way to make homes affordable for working people earning ordinary wages.***

*So I am afraid that we have a simple choice. We can decide to ignore the misery of young families forced to grow up in tiny flats with no outside space. We can pass by on the other side while working men and women in their twenties and thirties have to live with their parents or share bedrooms with friends. We can turn a blind eye while Margaret Thatcher's dream of a property-owning democracy shrivels. And shrug our shoulders as home ownership reverts to what it was in the 19th Century: a privilege, the exclusive preserve of people with large incomes or wealthy parents.*

*The second thing people want is a share in the benefits that new development can bring, whether that takes the form of a boost in the local authority's tax revenues or an investment in new community facilities or better infrastructure. So that's why we've introduced the New Homes Bonus that gives local councils over £8,000 over 6 years for every new Council Tax Band D home that gets built. Councils received £430 million in New Homes Bonus in 2012-13 and are provisionally set to receive £660 million in 2013-14.*

*A goal because we are more than half way through this Parliament, and it's now up to me to make sure that our reformed planning system provides enough land to build the houses that England's next generation so desperately needs*

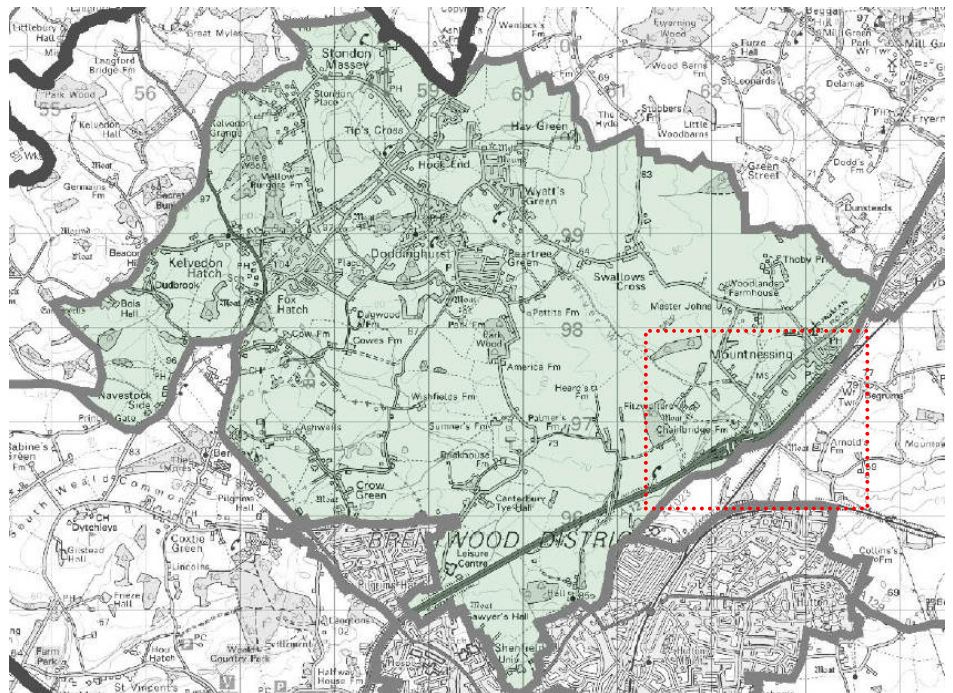
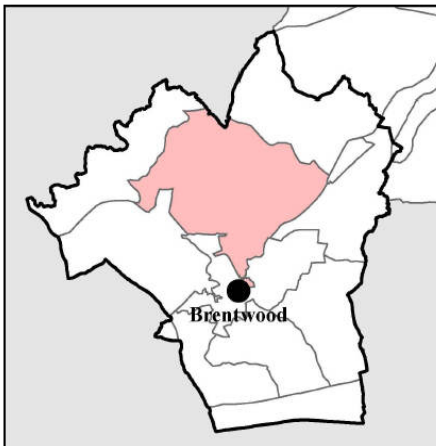
## Proposed Site

### 2.1 General Location

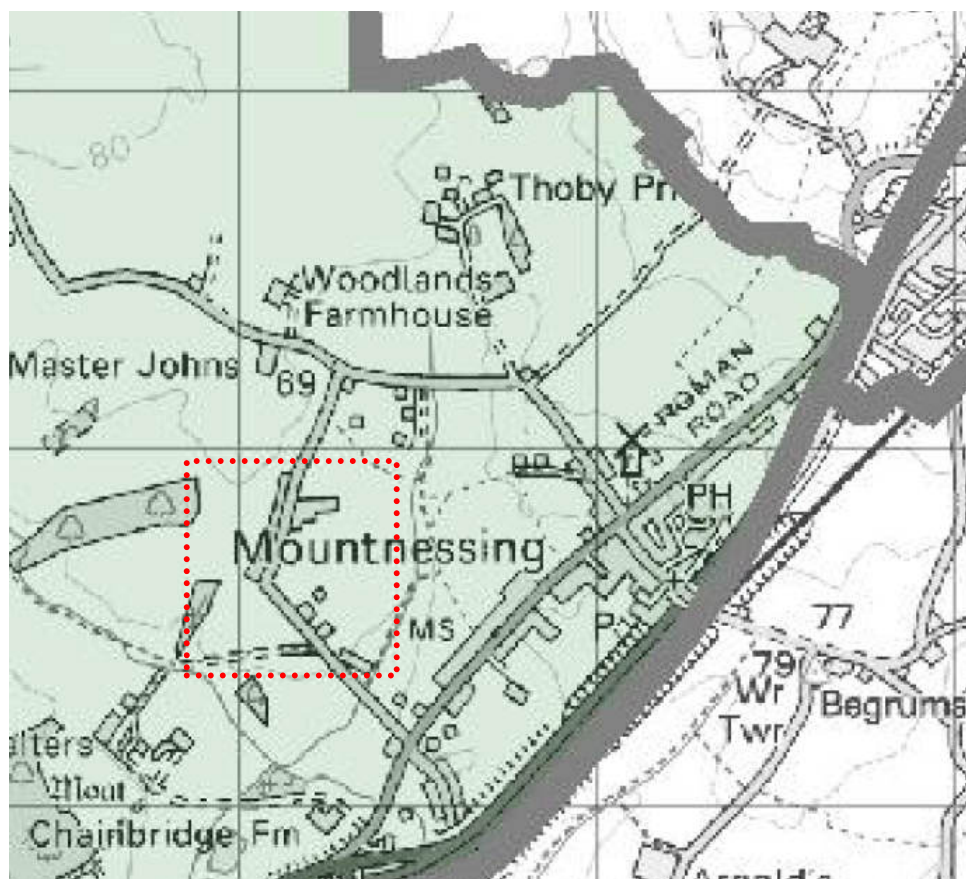
The general location of the proposed project is identified in the **Landscape Charter Brentwood 2006**<sup>[13]</sup> as part of the **F8 Doddinghurst Wooded Farmland** area, in the village of Mountnessing. The Charter describes the character of the area as follows:

*This character area encompasses an area of mature wooded farmland, situated to the north of Brentwood and overlooking the southern slopes of the Roding valley to the north. Patches of mature deciduous and mixed woodland cover undulating, predominantly arable farmland. Wooded character is further enhanced by mature hedged field boundaries and tree covered narrow lanes (with canopies often forming umbrellas across the roads).*

*Towards the northern edge of the area, sense of place is provided by views into the Roding Valley, whilst throughout the area, views to surrounding wooded horizons provides recognisable orientation. A very tall communications mast (close to Kelvedon Hatch) is a dominant landmark within views across this wooded landscape, particularly within views southwestwards from Stondon Massey. Settlement pattern consists of several small nucleated and linear villages, including Doddinghurst, Kelvedon Hatch, Stondon Massey and Mountnessing. Black vernacular barns are also scattered within the character area.*



*Doddinghurst wooded farmland area, proposed site area in red*



Mountrissing, proposed land area in red

The Landscape Charter further goes on to suggest guidelines for development within the area:

### ***Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines***

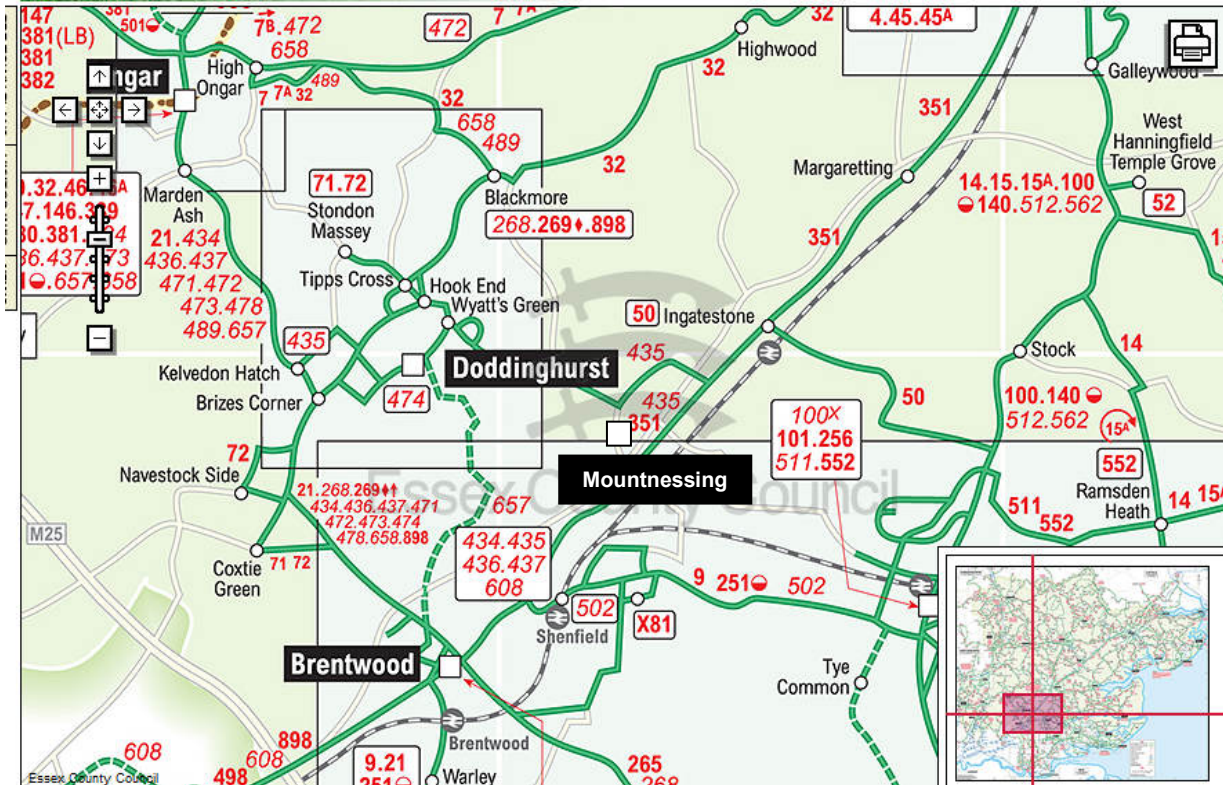
- *Ensure that the design of new agricultural buildings reflects the local vernacular style and uses materials which are appropriate to local landscape character.*
- *Conserve the mostly rural character of the area.*
- *Ensure that any new development responds to the historic settlement pattern and uses materials which are appropriate to local landscape character.*
- *Seek ways to ensure that any potential new development at the fringes of Brentwood or the other smaller settlements is not visually intrusive within the surrounding landscape setting.*
- *Conserve the landscape setting of settlements within the character area.*

### ***Suggested Land Management Guidelines***

- *Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland within the area as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.*
- *Conserve and manage the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen where appropriate through planting.*
- *Seek ways to mitigate the visual impact of the A12 and A128 road corridors through introducing news and strengthening existing parallel shelter belts.*
- *Conserve historic, tree lined and covered lanes and unimproved roadside verges.*
- *Establish arable field margins as important nature conservation habitats*

2.2 Transport Accessibility<sup>[07]</sup>

The local map below, indicates the road, bus and train services available around the immediate area of Mountnessing to adjoining villages and towns.



Transport map indicating road, bus and rail routes<sup>[14]</sup>

5.55 A key component of sustainable development patterns is good accessibility by public transport to key local services.

5.56 Information in Table 10 below, shows that new residential development in Brentwood completed during 2011/12 was very well located in this regard, with all completions being within 30 minutes public transport time of all key services.

Table 10: Residential development 30 minutes public transport time of local services 2011/12	Total	%
Total net housing completions 2011/12	132	100%
Local Service		
GP	134	100%
Hospital	134	100%
Primary school	134	100%
Secondary school	134	100%
Post 16 education	134	100%
Employment area	134	100%
Major retail centre	134	100%

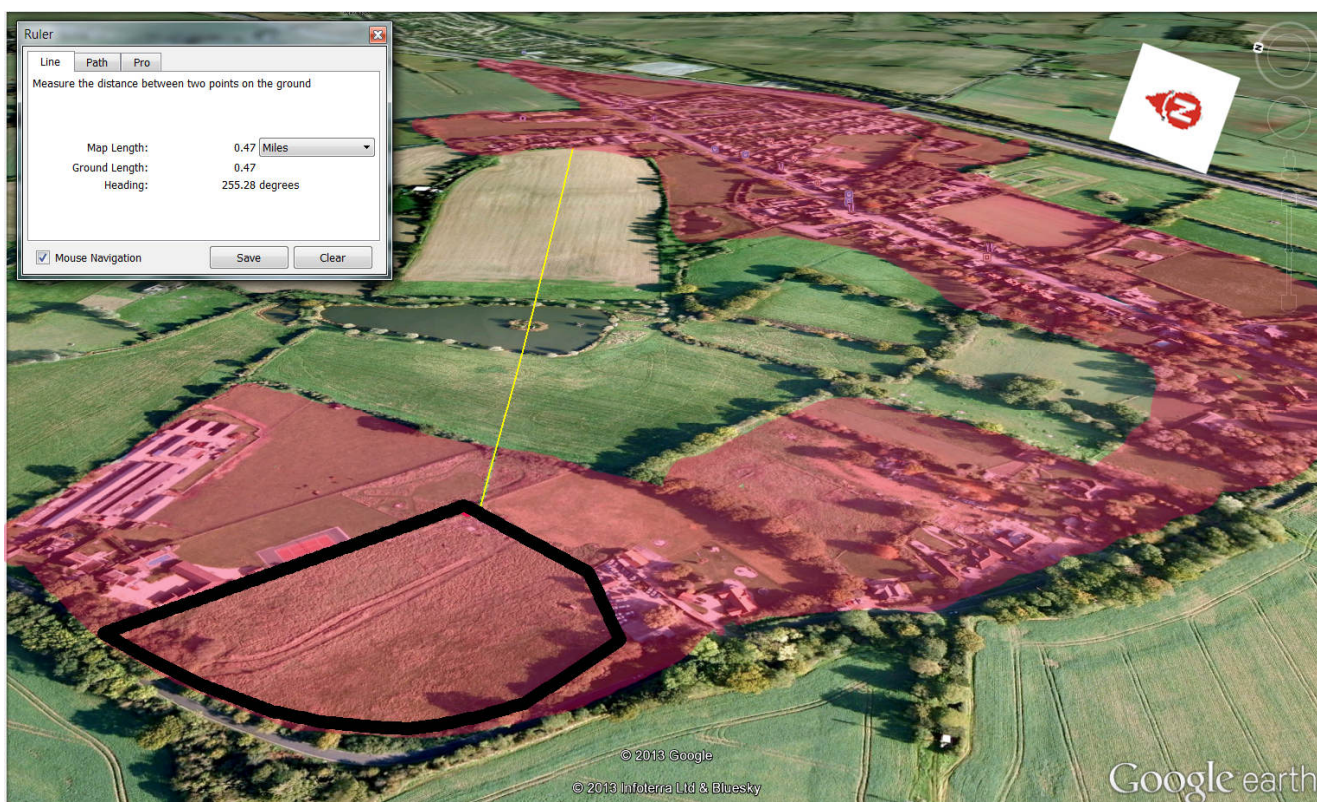
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## 2.3 Statement

The following subsections describe the main outline behind the proposed development and gives the reader essential background information relating to the general area.

It also outlines government and local guidelines to which any development must abide by and how the proposed development can positively enhance the general area without encroaching on the environment.

### 2.3.1 Mountnessing Settlement Aerial View



Mountnessing Settlement Area with proposed area indicated in black

### 2.3.2 General Area

The proposed plot, indicated in black on the above Google earth map<sup>[15]</sup> image is approximately 2.2 Hectares (5 Acres) and resides within the Mountnessing settlement area. The settlement comprises of a mixture of dwellings enclosed by mature hedgerows and tree lines, because of this layout, the nearest dwelling that may potentially overlook the plot, with the exception of the immediate neighbouring plots, is approximately 0.47 miles away and so development on the site would have a minimum impact on the rural area.

The land has been owned by the same family for over forty years. The ground on the plot is classified as grassland and has a pond located to the northern border, adjacent to St. Anne's Road, which is enclosed by a small cops. In the past, the grassland has been utilised by a local farmer for the production of hay, but the size of the site made it uneconomical to farm and has been unfarmed for several years. There is a pitched roofed pump house building on the site.



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### 2.3.3 Access

The site is directly accessed from St. Anne's Road, off Roman Road. The road is lined on both sides by mature hedges and trees, which provide a natural screening to the plot on two sides. The road is mainly used to connect the villages of Mountnessing to Doddinghurst, Fryerning, Blackmore and neighbouring rural settlements.

### 2.3.4 Neighbouring Properties

The proposed plot is bordered to the north and east by a single property called 'The Spinney'. The grounds belonging to *The Spinney* are split between garden, recreation and domestic uses. Over the last thirty years the property has been substantially expanded from the original single cottage to its present form, boasting extensive outbuildings, swimming pool, tennis court and a wild garden.

Brentwood Council are currently deliberating on planning permission<sup>[16]</sup> for substantial two storey rear extension to the property, involving a replacement conservatory, re-positioned porch, front dormer and new chimney (recent planning history is available on the council planning website<sup>[17]</sup>)

The southern border of the proposed plot meets two properties. The first is a second hand car dealership and repair centre called '*Bentley Vehicle Supplies*' (BVS)<sup>[18]</sup>, the other is the lawned garden area of a domestic home called *Thoby Farm*. It should be noted that the proposed plot and both the aforementioned properties were all originally part of Thoby Farm and formally owned by the family of the current owner of the proposed plot. At the time of the family ownership, the proposed plot was grazing land, the plot currently occupied by BVS, consisted of purely storage barns from the original farm and the farm house was the family home, all three areas were subsequently divided after the sale of the farm.

It was recently declared that BVS are to ceased trading at the site and that the Brentwood Council has granted permission<sup>[19]</sup> for substantial groundwork and reconstruction work on the site, involving the demolish and removal of all the buildings currently erected on the plot, being replaced by a single, extensive four bedroom, two storey house.

### 2.3.5 Description

It is proposed that the plot be used specifically for the construction of affordable housing, which is currently substantially oversubscribed at present in the Brentwood area. The proposed plot is located towards the northern end of the Mountnessing settlement area, located between established businesses and dwellings. As such the proposed plot should therefore be considered primarily as an infill development and despite the location being situated in a green belt area, due to the nature of the development, should qualify to be considered as a rural exception site.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>[20]</sup> describes **affordable housing** and **rural exception** sites as the following:

***Affordable housing:*** *Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.*

## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

*Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.*

*Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).*

*Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.*

*Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as “low cost market” housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.*

and that...

***Rural exception sites:*** *Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed at the local authority’s discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.*

*Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed at the local authority’s discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.*

It goes on to say...

*In rural areas, exercising the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities, local planning authorities should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through rural exception sites where appropriate. Local planning authorities should in particular consider whether allowing some market housing would facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs.*

and that...

*limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan; or limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.*

## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

and that...

*Local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area. They should:*

- *prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment should identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period which:*
- *meets household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change;*
- *addresses the need for all types of housing, including affordable housing and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes);<sup>34</sup> and*
- *caters for housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand;*

### 2.3.6 Character

It is proposed that the scheme comprises a diverse mix of smaller dwellings types ranging from 1 bedroom flats to 3 bedroom family homes. It is important that the new development is not visually intrusive within the surrounding landscape setting and every precaution should be taken to ensure the design and materials are appropriate. A recommendation to the architect would be that the new dwellings are housed together in blocks of 1 and 2 storey designs, based upon the local *Black vernacular barns* style to fit into the natural landscape of the surrounding area.

It is important that land management also be carefully considered during the planning stage so to conserve and manage the existing hedgerow pattern that currently exists on the development borders. Following the suggestions of the Landscape Charter, a recommendation to the architect would be to where necessary, create new hedgerows and trees through careful planting, to enforce the arable field margins to create natural habitats for wildlife.

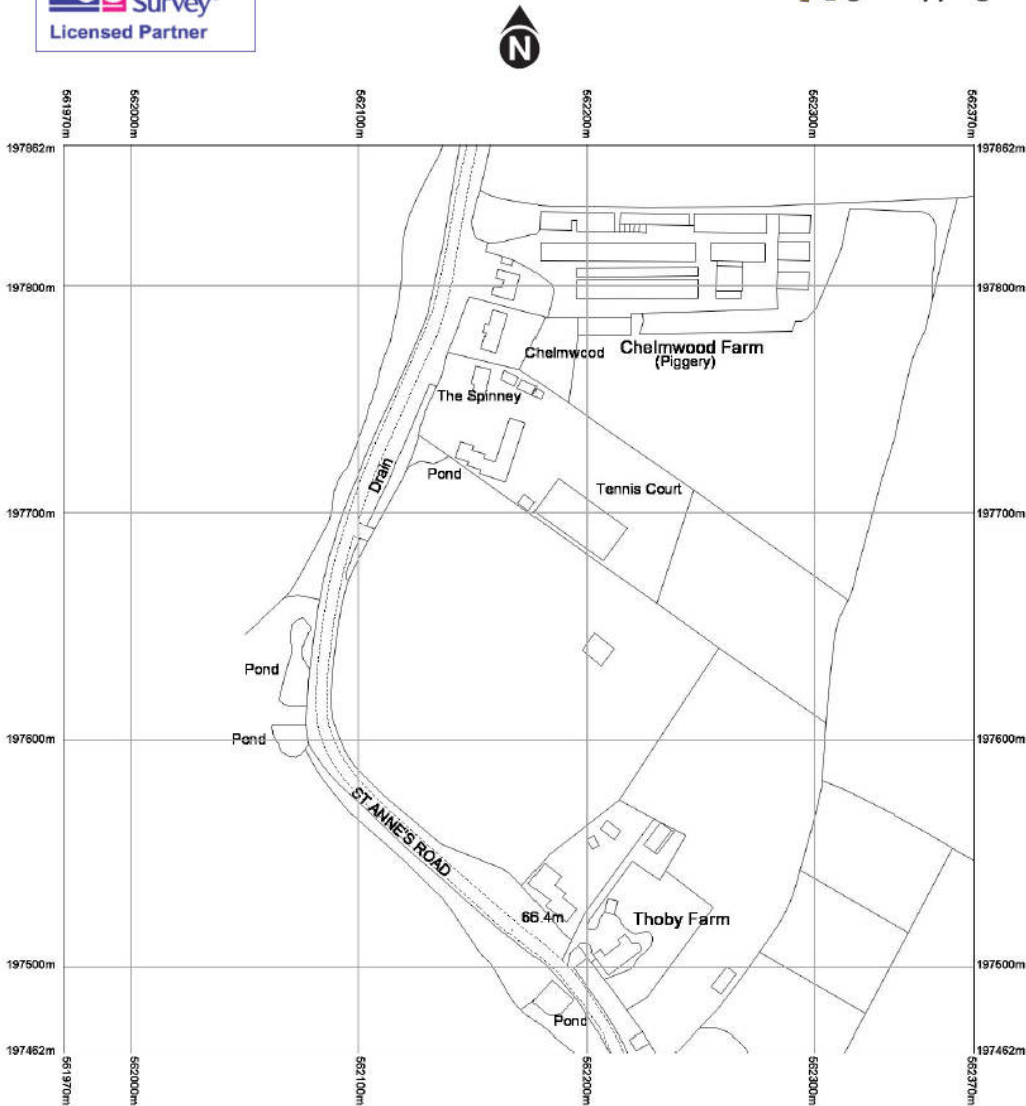
### 2.3.7 Use

It is proposed that the site accommodate the construction of a min of ten new low cost dwellings for residential purposes. The tenure of the properties has not been finalised, but are likely to be either offered for rent or shared ownership. Local people, especially families, who meet the needs criteria will benefit from this affordable housing scheme that allows them to live in the village that may otherwise be unobtainable on the open market.

The Mountnessing village boasts several pubs, hair salon, butchers, mobility shop, village shop, primary school and a recycling centre. The village has a recreational grounds and a tennis club with tennis facilities. A regular bus service runs to nearby towns and villages. The proposals are for family housing that would benefit from and support the services outlined above.

# DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

## 2.4 Location Plan - Ordnance Survey (1:2500 scale)<sup>[21]</sup>

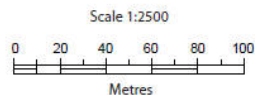


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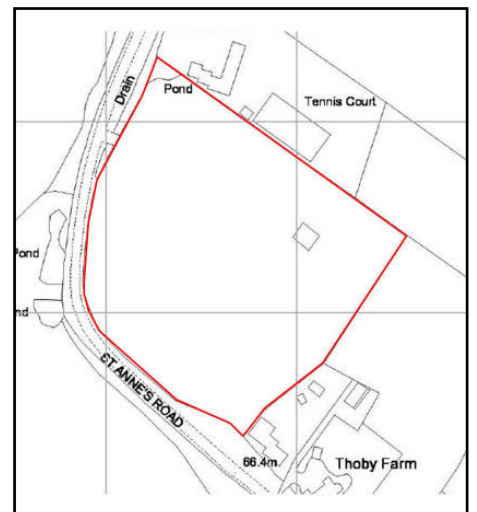
Ordnance Survey and the OS Symbol are registered trademarks and OS MasterMap<sup>®</sup> is a trademark of Ordnance Survey, the national mapping agency of Great Britain.

The representation of a road, track or path is no evidence of a right of way.

The representation of features as lines is no evidence of a property boundary.



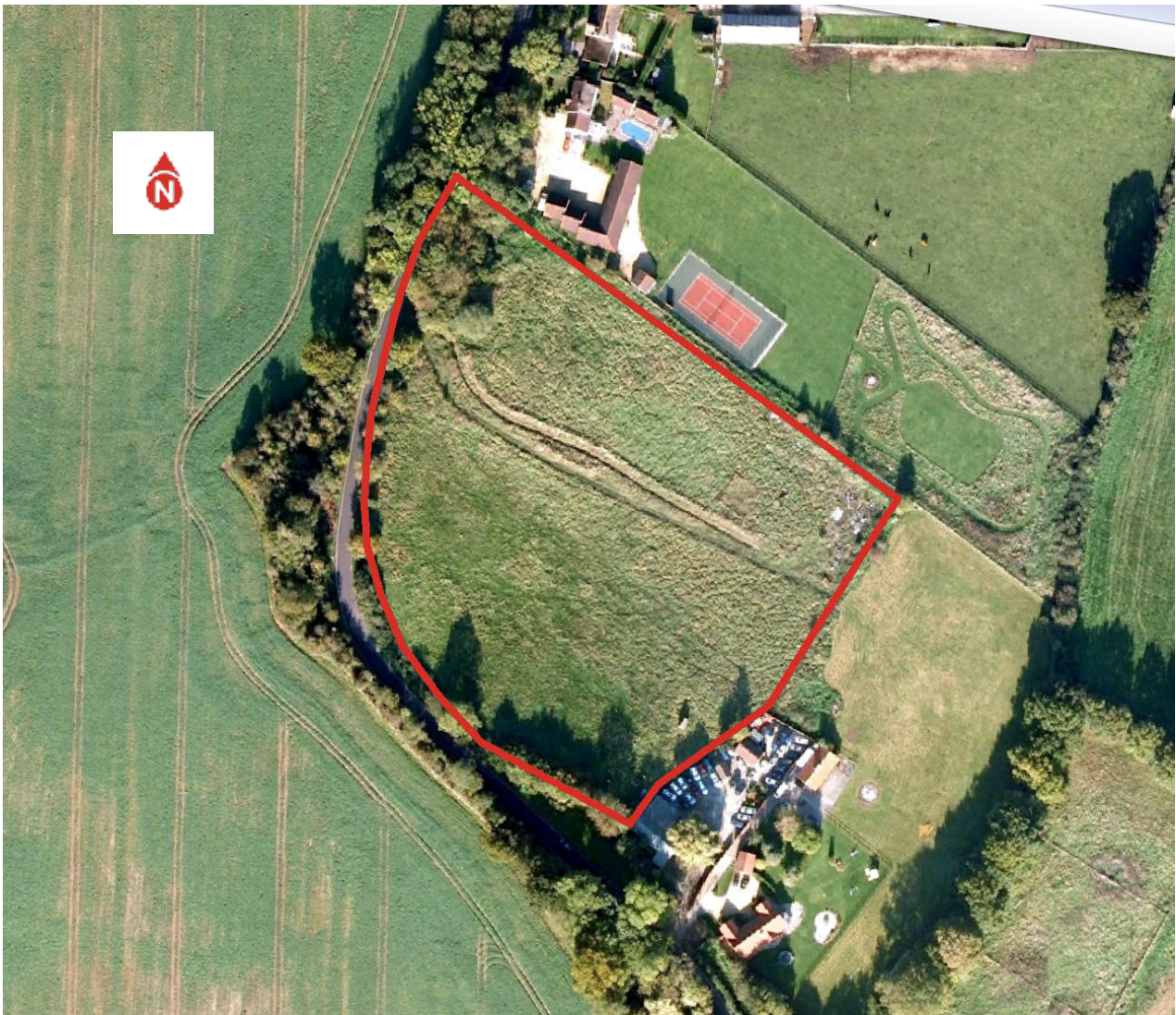
Supplied by: Getmapping  
Centre coordinates: 562170, 197662  
OS License Number: 100030848



Proposed area marked in red

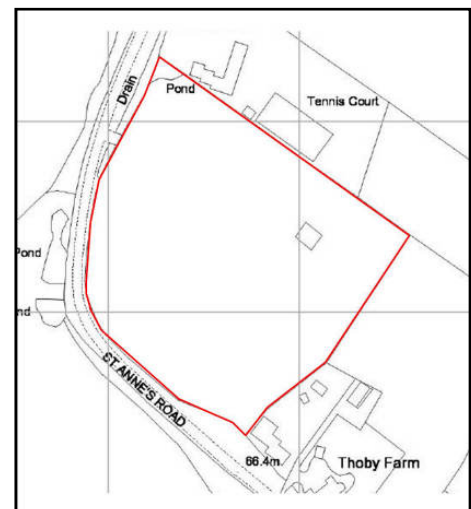
# DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

## 2.5 Location - Aerial View<sup>[22]</sup>



The proposed plot area is approximately 5 acres

Mature trees and hedges border the plot on two sides following St. Anne's Road. These provide a natural screening of the area and provide a natural shield obscuring any view of the plot from these directions.



Proposed area marked in red

# DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

## 2.6 Location 360° Degree Aerial Views



South Western View - open countryside



North Eastern View - mainly open countryside (excluding adjoining property)

# DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT



North Western View - open countryside



South Eastern View - settlement area, adjoining properties and open countryside.

# DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

## 2.7 St. Anne's Road - Street Views



St Anne's Road - Street View (South)



St Anne's Road - Street View (West)



St Anne's Road - Street View (North)



## Brentwood Council Policies

### 3.1 Policy C8 - Special landscape Areas

*A landscape character assessment should be prepared for the Brentwood Borough Council administrative area, identifying the particular character of different localities within the countryside. until such an assessment has been completed, special landscape areas, where they are defined in this local plan, will be taken to identify areas where, in the interim, conservation or restoration of existing character should be given high priority.*

### 3.2 Policy G8 - Special Landscape Areas

**9.35** *The Countryside Conservation Plan (1986), published by Essex County Council, described and identified Special Landscape Areas as valuable high quality landscapes which are the result of a combination of natural features such as vegetation cover, relief and presence of water. Substantial parts of the Borough are designated as Special Landscape Areas, as shown on the Proposals Map:*

Childerditch:	Area South of Brentwood to the A127 including Thornday Park and an area East of the A128
Weald:	Weald Park area.
Highwood & Hanningfield:	Area from <b>Mountnessing</b> eastwards.
Roding Valley:	Area North and West of Kelvedon Hatch towards Stondon Massey, Ongar and Stapleford Abbots.

**9.36** *The conservation and/or restoration of these areas is important both to the particular locality and to the County's natural heritage in terms of their special character and visual quality. These areas, therefore, shall be protected from development that detracts from their character. However, more recently, the Countryside Agency and English Heritage, with the help of English Nature, have published The Character of England - Landscape, Wildlife and Natural features. This has established a nationally consistent framework for more detailed local analysis of landscape character, and PPS7 encourages LPAs to carry out landscape character assessments for their areas. Brentwood Council, together with other Essex Authorities, are committed to undertaking such an assessment, which once completed will supersede the Special Landscape Area designations.*

**9.37** *Until such a local landscape assessment for Brentwood has been completed, the Special Landscape Areas, as defined in this Local Plan, will be taken to identify areas where the conservation or restoration of existing landscape character will be given high priority.*

### 3.3 Policy GB2 - Development Criteria

*When considering proposals for development in the green belt, the local planning authority will need to be satisfied that they do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the green belt and do not harm the openness of the green belt. The precedent created by allowing even an individually innocuous or well-merited proposal which cumulatively would undermine green belt objectives will be taken into account. Account will also be taken of the following:*

## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

- l) The effect of proposals on public rights of way*
- li) The need to preserve or enhance existing landscape features*
- lii) Any building must be satisfactorily located in respect of the surrounding landscape and any adjoining buildings.*

### **3.4 Policy GB3 - Settlements Excluded from Greenbelt Development Criteria**

*7.21 In order to achieve sustainable patterns of development and to conserve and protect the Green Belt, new residential development will be directed to those existing settlements excluded from the Green Belt. [As referred to above, the boundaries around these settlements have been defined by reference to a number of specific criteria and have been the subject of a comprehensive review as part of the preparation of the Replacement Local Plan.]*

*7.22 PPG3 refers to the national target that, by 2008, 60% of additional housing should be provided on previously developed land and through the conversion of existing buildings (by definition this is generally, but not wholly, within existing urban areas). As a result of the application of the Councils Green Belt policies, Brentwood has been achieving comparable figures of some 90% in recent years.*  
*GB3 Settlements Excluded from the Green Belt*

*Except as may be allowed for in policies h10, gb4-gb12, gb16 and gb17 new residential development will be restricted to the following settlements excluded from the green belt as identified on the proposals map:*

*blackmore, brentwood, doddinghurst, herongate, hook end, ingatestone, ingrave, kelvedon hatch, mountnessing, stondon massey, west horndon and wyatts green*

### **3.5 Policy GB28 - Landscape Enhancement**

*7.88 Every opportunity will be taken to enhance the appearance of the countryside for those living in or visiting the Boroughs rural areas. This will be achieved through additional tree and hedge planting, or other management measures appropriate to the particular site. New planting should, wherever possible, be undertaken using species native to the area. Any work should be undertaken in a manner that protects the nature conservation value of the site and promotes biodiversity, including opportunities for habitat creation. Such works will be undertaken in relation to the grant of planning permission, Council initiatives or in partnership with private owners, including the provision of tree belts and screen planting in new road or other development proposals. The Council will work with and support Thames Chase in its aim to promote landscape enhancement within the Forest area.*

*GB28 Landscape Enhancement*

*Where appropriate, tree planting and hedge screening will be expected in proposals for development in the green belt. In addition, Brentwood countryside management service will carry out new planting on publicly owned land, and in co-operation with the owner, on private land. Within special landscape areas and other areas where the landscape needs improvement emphasis will be given to restore and enhance damaged landscape and will be a requirement where appropriate. Wherever possible, new planting should be carried out using species native to the area. Proposals should safeguard the existing ecological value of the site and include measures for habitat creation*

## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

### 3.6 Policy H10 – Affordable Rural Housing

*In very special circumstances the development of small scale low cost rural housing may be permitted in the green belt where all the following criteria are met:*

*i) The site is either within the confines of an existing settlement or, exceptionally, occupied by an existing use and/or building, the redevelopment of which would have no greater impact than that existing on the openness of the green belt and the purposes of including land in it.*

*ii) There is a demonstrable local, social and economic need in the short and longer term.*

*iii) No other suitable alternative accommodation is available within the built up area.*

*iv) Satisfactory safeguards exist through a section 106 agreement to limit occupancy to local needs in perpetuity.*

*v) Such accommodation being provided to those local households not able to afford on the open market to rent or buy a dwelling of sufficient size in the borough.*

*vi) Such accommodation being restricted to the following categories of person:*

*1) Existing local residents requiring separate accommodation, or*

*2) People whose work provides an important and necessary local service, or*

*3) Close relatives of existing local residents who have a demonstrable need to either support or be supported by them.*

*Furthermore, any development would need to comply with the following criteria:*

*vii) The proposal would not have an unacceptable detrimental impact on other persons enjoyment of the countryside.*

*viii) The proposal complies with policy h14.*

*ix) Applications will be considered against the criteria set out in policy gb2.*

*in the context of this policy "local" is taken to refer to a parish or ward, or in exceptional circumstances adjacent parishes/wards.*

### 3.7 Policy H14 - Housing Density

*The council will expect any proposal for new residential development to be of an appropriate density that makes efficient use of land.*

*Residential densities will be expected to be no less than 30 dwellings per hectare net unless the special character of the surrounding area determines that such densities would be inappropriate.*

*Densities greater than 65 dwellings per hectare net will be expected in town and district centres or other locations with good public transport accessibility.*

### Conclusion

Over the last five years, the need for affordable housing nationally has become a major concern, the research undertaken in this report supports this fact and Brentwood has been identified as a specific area in need of this type of housing.

To encourage economic growth nationally, the government wants to build more affordable housing and has introduced the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** which came into full force recently, following a 12-month transition period for local councils.

As part of the NPPF local councils are required to identify and seek to meet the housing, business and other development needs of their Boroughs, through a **Local Development Plan (LDP)**. However, there are concerns that a very low percentage of councils have so far managed to prove that they have enough land to meet a five-year housing plan.

**Brentwood Council** recently distributed, to local households and businesses, the first of a series of newsletters outlining their LDP needs on future population projections. Based upon an independent assessment, it is suggested that up to 362 new homes per year will be required, totalling 5,430 new homes over the LDP period (2015 to 2030). Although the Council have stated a more realistic figure is more likely to be approximately 3,500 homes (around 233 a year).

According to the 2011 census, it is estimated that Brentwood's population is in excess of 73,600, up 5,174 or 7.6 per cent on 2001 census figures. It has been reported that as of April 2011 there was 2,514 people waiting for council housing, up 223 per cent on 2004 figures. There is no doubt that the population growth is set to continue and if so the need for affordable housing is going to be more than ever.

The proposed plot is ideally suited for the LDP to consider for affordable home. The land itself, despite being classified as greenfield, is of a low grade quality and therefore unsuitable for crop growth. The geographical location of the plot is such that it is naturally screened on two sides by mature hedgerows and trees. The general location of the plot is within a settlement area, positioned between established businesses and domestic homes, making it alleageable for consideration under *Policy H10, Affordable Rural Housing*.

As a greenfield location, every opportunity will need to be taken to enhance the appearance of the countryside and any development would need to comply to *Policy H14, Housing Density*. There are no formal plans in place for the plot at present, but when drawings are produced, structures will need to comply to *Policy GB2, Development Criteria* with landscaping and new planting being introduced, using species native to the area, to comply with *Policy GB28, Landscape Enhancement*. There are no public footpaths or rights of way across the proposed site.

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## £14m boost to housing

**This is Essex** Thursday, October 07, 2010

ALMOST 300 people will get affordable housing in Brentwood thanks to millions of pounds pledged from the national housing and regeneration agency for England.

Brentwood is Essex's big winner in the total £14.8 million pledged for the county from the Homes and communities Agency.

Of the 390 new homes to be started this financial year in Essex, 72 will be in Brentwood, providing affordable homes for 295 people.

Brentwood house prices are booming but the high cost of mortgages in the town are leaving many young people unable to live in the town they grew up in.

Naisha Polaine, head of area for the HCA in the East of England said: "This is positive news for both local residents and our partners.

"The £14million over the next three years will enable new homes to be built which in turn will address the local housing needs of Essex."

Read more: <http://www.thisistotalessex.co.uk/163-14m-boost-housing/story-12621562-detail/story.html#ixzz2YHYxxsde>

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## **Brentwood council housing waiting list grows by 'appalling' 223%**

Brentwood Gazette - Monday, January 28, 2013

**By Piers Meyler**

THE number of people waiting for a council house in Brentwood grew approximately ten times faster than the national average. Figures from Brentwood Borough Council show that the waiting list rocketed from 777 in April 2004 to 2,514 in April 2011 – an increase of 223 per cent.



**HOT PROPERTY:** There are 3,054 people currently waiting for a home

During the same period, the average for England rose by 28 per cent to 1.84 million, according to the homeless charity Shelter.

Between April 2011 and April 2012, the council's waiting list increased further, from 2,514 to 3,054. The news has sparked criticism that the authority is failing to address people's housing needs. Gabriella Clarke, 25, who lives in social housing in Rollason Way, said she feels lucky to have been offered a housing association property after spending 30 months on the waiting list.

She told the Gazette this week: "There is not enough affordable housing and quite often there is an attitude that there can't be poor people living here in Brentwood." Hutton North councillor Russell Quirk said: "The Conservatives locally may have a disdain for those in need of social housing, but it is the council's responsibility to ensure that they act to provide housing when it is needed and not to neglect our residents in this appalling way." The council's minority Labour group leader Mike Le Surf added: "This is a crisis and the only way we can get out of it is to build more houses." A borough council spokesman said: "Our current revision of our waiting list will see a change requiring anyone on it to have a local connection. "This will lead to the reduction in the waiting list where there is no such restriction currently."

## **POLL: More than 5,000 extra homes needed in Brentwood**

**Brentwood Gazette** - Wednesday, June 26, 2013

**By Chris Richards**

Nearly 5,500 new homes will need to be built in Brentwood between 2015 and 2030 in order to keep up with population growth, according to a report published this week.

**What do you think? Take part in our poll - on the right.**



The document, compiled by consultants Peter Brett Associates, states that as many as 5,430 properties – 362 a year – will need to be constructed in order to meet the borough's housing needs during this period.

However, Brentwood Borough Council, which commissioned the study, believes that a figure of approximately 3,500 homes (around 233 a year) is more realistic. In support of this figure, the authority released a list of 22 sites across the borough where development could take place, including the Wates Way Industrial Estate, off Ongar Road, and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service's former headquarters in Rayleigh Road, Hutton.

Other sites identified as potentially suitable for housing include The Baytree Centre in Brentwood High Street, and Ingatestone Garden Centre, in Roman Road, Ingatestone. The news comes as the council continues to develop its Local Development Plan (LDP) for 2015 - 2030.

As well as housing, the LDP seeks to meet the business and other development needs of the borough to 2030. Brentwood needs extra houses to cater for its rising population, which, according to the latest information available – the 2011 Census – is now at least 73,600. This was 5,174 (or 7.6 per cent) up on the 2001 Census figure of 68,426.

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On Friday, the council sent out 34,884 letters to every resident and business in the borough to keep them abreast of these latest developments. In this letter, the authority describes the consultants' estimate of 5,430 as a "starting point" and stresses no decision has been made on the final figure.

The council adds that it will arrive at this number only after reviewing criteria such as road capacity, the availability of land and the impact on the Green Belt. However, Tory council leader Louise McKinlay said a figure of around 3,500 new homes between 2015 and 2030 was more "deliverable". She told the Gazette: "What we are talking about here is the practical number that we can deliver without it harming Brentwood. "We want to see Brentwood thrive and we can't have development that is going to be harmful to the future of the borough. We will fight to protect our quality, green space."

Mrs McKinlay, who represents Hutton North, added: "We must make sure that our roads, our communications, our drains will cope; that extra demand on schools and doctors' surgeries will be met and that the facilities our residents value and use now, they will still enjoy in 20 years." Councillor Barry Aspinell, the leader of the council's Liberal Democrat opposition group, said: "I don't want to see any new homes in the Brentwood urban area – enough is enough. "I would like to see affordable housing provided for the villages where the young people have to move out to find somewhere to live."

MP Eric Pickles accepted that the requirement for new housing was a "big issue" in the borough and described the construction of 3,500 new homes over 15 years as "well manageable". He added: "That figure would not change the character or nature of Brentwood." The council plans to publish its draft LDP later this summer.

## Brentwood Local Development Plan Newsletter

Issue 1: June 2013

Welcome to the first Brentwood Local Development Plan Newsletter, updating you on the progress of the Council's forthcoming Local Development Plan. This issue is being sent to all residents and businesses in the Borough.

### Housing Requirement Update

You may be aware of various changes to the planning system brought in since the Coalition Government took office in 2010. This has included abolishing regional plans and introducing the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). These changes affect how the Council plans for the Borough's future housing requirements, among other things.

We now have to identify and seek to meet the housing, business and other development needs of the Borough. For housing, this includes both affordable and market 'objectively assessed' need.

### How many homes?

To establish how many new homes will need to be built in the Borough, we have commissioned work to identify the Borough's housing need. This will be key evidence to support the emerging Local Development Plan.

This work assesses needs based on future population projections. The independent assessment suggests a figure ranging up to 362 new homes per year, which totals 5,430 new homes over the LDP period (2015 to 2030).

**Please be aware that this figure is a *starting point* for the Council to work with. No decision has been made by Brentwood Council on the figure. The figure is subject to revision as new data becomes available. At this stage, it is only provisional.**

### What next?

The next stage will be for the Council to review the housing numbers and consider what level of housing the Borough can sustainably accommodate. This means that we need to assess the provisional figure of 362 homes a year as a starting point and consider the implications of accommodating this level against a number of criteria, for example:

- Capacity of key infrastructure, such as roads and utilities
- Transport; public, walking and cycling provision
- Access to services, such as schools, shops, GPs and community facilities
- Availability of land in sustainable locations
- Impact on Green Belt
- Environmental constraints, such as flooding and nature conservation
- Landscape sensitivity

This process is happening nationally. We will be speaking with our neighbouring authorities to work out whether we can accommodate this housing need together.

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There are a number of factors that the Council will need to consider before a decision is made on the final number. These will be considered further as part of the Local Development Plan process.

### **Local Development Plan Consultation – your opportunity to have your say**

The next stage of the Local Development Plan will be to produce a Draft Plan for **public consultation** this summer. In December 2013, your local Councillors will consider the final Plan to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination.

The Draft Plan will set out the level of housing to be provided based on the above figure as a starting point. The Plan will also set out provision for new employment and retail floorspace. This will include draft land allocations for development with planning policies to guide decisions on location, scale and types of development. The Plan will provide direction for where development goes in order to maintain local distinctiveness.

We would like to hear what you think about the Draft Plan. You' ll be able to see the Plan and have your say over the coming months.

The next issue of the Local Development Plan Newsletter will be available in late July and will contain more information on how you can have your say.

To receive future Local Development Plan Newsletters, please email **[planning.policy@brentwood.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@brentwood.gov.uk)** or phone 01277 312620

For more information, please see the Planning pages of the Council's website at **[www.brentwood.gov.uk/planning](http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/planning)**

## **Nick Boles - Parliament Keynote Speech**

**FINAL VERSION - EMBARGOED UNTIL 12.01AM THURS 10/01/13**

### **Housing the next generation**

At the Conservative Party conference last October, David Cameron set a clear direction for Conservatives in government. He declared that the mission of the modern Conservative Party is “to build an “aspiration nation”, in which we “get behind people who want to get on in life.” “It’s what’s always made our hearts beat faster,” he said. “It’s not just an economic mission” – but “a moral one” too.

I listened to that speech as one of David Cameron’s newest and most junior ministers. And, though I found the Prime Minister’s message inspiring, implicit in it was a challenge that keeps me awake at night. No aspiration is more deeply embedded in the British psyche than the desire to own your own home. But the prospect of doing so has been slipping ever further out of the reach of millions of hard-working people. This is a result of our decades-long failure to build enough houses. And the root cause of this is our decades-long refusal to release enough land for development.

Of course, there are other problems affecting the housing market in the short term: most of all, the lack of finance for buyers and developers since the credit crunch. These the Government is already tackling. FirstBuy, which gives first time buyers an equity loan to reduce the deposit they need to find to just 5% of the price of their new home, will invest £460 million, matched by housebuilders, to help 27,000 people by 2014.

The NewBuy guarantee scheme enables other households to access 95% mortgages for new build homes, and the Prime Minister announced on Monday that we will bring forward further measures to increase the availability of affordable mortgages. Meanwhile, my colleague, Mark Prisk, is deploying the £570 million in the Get Britain Building fund to get building going on sites that already have planning permission, and a further £225 million fund to accelerate the delivery of housing on large sites like Cranbrook in Devon and Ebbsfleet in Kent.

But, in the long term, the original source of our housing crisis is the failure of past governments to provide enough land for development. As planning minister, it is my job to persuade local authorities to make more land available so that more homes can be built and the price of new homes comes down – and thereby reverse the trend that has been heading in the wrong direction for decades. Now can you understand why I sleep a little uneasily?

We should not underestimate the extent of Labour’s failure to build enough homes in their years in office. The 2011 census revealed that, in the Noughties, home ownership in England fell, for the first time in 60 years: from 68% to 63%. Why? Because houses became too expensive. The homelessness charity, Shelter, has shown that if the price of food had risen as fast as the price of housing in the last 30 years, a supermarket chicken would now cost £47 – and a jar of instant coffee would cost £20. In the 1990s, the average person setting aside 5% of their income each week could save up for a deposit on a house after 8 years. Today, it would take the same person 47 years.

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Some say that this trend is inevitable, given a growing population, rising incomes and a finite supply of land. But in Germany real house prices have remained constant since 2000. And in the Netherlands, which has shared the UK's rapid population growth, real house prices rose by a little bit more than a fifth in the same decade. So why did they nearly double in the UK?

The answer is simple. We've built too few houses to keep up with the rapid increase in the number of households needing a place to live, especially the dizzying increase in the number of people living on their own. There are several reasons for this growth in the number of households. Some we should celebrate – like the fact that people are living longer. Others we should regret – like the high rate of divorce or the fact that Labour's support for unlimited immigration led to a net influx of 1.7 million people into England in a decade. But all of these changes have happened and all of the people concerned have the right to a decent home.

In 2008, Shelter estimated that we would need to build 240,000 new homes a year in England to cater for all of these new households. In February 2012, Alan Holmans from the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research updated these estimates using my department's publication of new projections of the number of households. He concluded, that, to keep pace with this trend, we now need to build 270,000 new homes a year (leading to a net increase of 250,000 a year as 20,000 of them would replace existing homes that have to be demolished.)

I don't know whether Mr Holman's projections will prove accurate. But I do know that the house-building that took place during the Noughties fell woefully short of what was necessary. Despite a decade of easy credit and an explicit target to build 213,000 new homes a year in England, the last government only managed to complete an annual average of 147,000 new homes between 2000 and 2010. In the same period the population went up by 3.4 million and, from 1998 to 2008, the number of households went up by 1.7 million. On average, in each year of the Noughties, the Netherlands built over 4.4 new homes for every 1,000 inhabitants and the French built over 5.6. In England, we built just 2.9.

This is in spite of the fact that, between 2000 and 2010, total mortgage debt in the UK more than doubled - from £500 billion to £1,240 billion. Labour's debt binge just fuelled a massive boom in prices – and did little to boost the supply of new homes. Those homes that were built got smaller and smaller, as land prices went up and up. From 2001-2003 the new houses we built in England were smaller than the ones we've already got – and 30% smaller than the new houses being built in the Netherlands, a country that is more densely populated than ours.

As in so many areas of our national life under Labour, for housing, the Noughties were a wasted decade. Loads of money sloshing around, lots of top-down targets, but very little to show for it. So now we need to build even more houses to make up the ground lost while they were in office – and to keep pace with future growth in the number of households needing homes. And that's assuming that we continue to tighten our grip on immigration so that net migration falls below 100,000 a year by 2015.

I understand why the idea of a lot more house-building makes people nervous. And I certainly don't want to see more open land developed than is absolutely necessary. But unfortunately there is no painless way to make homes affordable for working people earning ordinary wages.

“What about all the empty homes?” people ask. And they are certainly right to suggest that we should make full use of our existing housing stock. But most empty homes are only empty for short periods while they change hands or are renovated or are caught up in probate after the last owner's death.

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There are around 259,000 houses that have been empty for more than 6 months, 50,000 fewer than in 2009. The government has already invested £160 million and that, together with a share of the £300 million additional spending announced in September's Housing Growth Package, should help put over 15,000 empty properties back into use by 2015. Nobody wants to see good homes standing empty. But they can't make more than a marginal contribution to the hundreds of thousands of new homes that we need.

"What about all the brownfield land?" people then ask – and they point to the CPRE's estimate that England has enough brownfield land to support 1.5 million homes. We all want to maximise the number of homes we build on previously developed land – not least because such land tends to benefit from existing links to our road and rail networks. But even the CPRE admitted that we would only get 450,000 new homes out of brownfield sites in those parts of the country where most of the new homes are needed (London, the South East and the South West.) And achieving that number would require us to build on every scrap of brownfield land.

The fact is that we already are building most new homes on brownfield land: 76% of all the homes completed in 2010 as against 56% in 1997. We simply can't squeeze much more out of brownfield sites. To restrict new house-building to brownfield land would leave us a long way short of the number of new homes we need.

"What about the developers' land banks?" people then ask. And I do understand why it riles people that their local councils have to find new sites for development, when the major house-builders are sitting on land with permission to build hundreds of thousands of new homes? But, this concern is also misplaced, resting on a misunderstanding about how the British house-building industry works.

At the end of September 2012, on sites of 10 or more units, there were 487,000 units with detailed planning permission. About 246,000 of them were on sites where building hasn't even started – and the Growth and Infrastructure Bill going through Parliament will make it easier for developers to renegotiate the unaffordable Section 106 agreements that are have made many of these schemes unviable and caused them to stall.

About half of the units on sites with planning permission belong to schemes of 150 units or more which developers generally build out over 3-5 years. If we are going to have any prospect of getting our current house-builders to build the number of new homes we need, we need them to have a pipeline of sites representing 3-5 years' supply. That's over a million units. The problem with developers' land banks is not that they exist – but that they are currently much too small to feed the level of house-building we need.

So I am afraid that we have a simple choice.

We can decide to ignore the misery of young families forced to grow up in tiny flats with no outside space. We can pass by on the other side while working men and women in their twenties and thirties have to live with their parents or share bedrooms with friends. We can turn a blind eye while Margaret Thatcher's dream of a property-owning democracy shrivels. And shrug our shoulders as home ownership reverts to what it was in the 19th Century: a privilege, the exclusive preserve of people with large incomes or wealthy parents.

But I don't believe that anyone really wants to go down this road. Certainly not any Conservative. If we believe in anything, we believe in the power of home ownership to motivate people to work hard, raise strong families and build healthy communities, to put down roots, take responsibility for their



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surroundings and look out for their neighbours. As David Cameron said, “We get behind people who want to get on in life, the young people who dream of their first pay-cheque, their first car, their first home – and are ready and willing to work hard to get those things.”

There is only one choice for a Conservative. To accept that we are going to have to build on previously undeveloped land. But, to resolve that we will make these decisions locally, and that we will build beautiful places like we used to. Like they’ve done in the last few years with strong local support on a greenfield site at Newhall in Harlow. That way England can remain the green and pleasant land we all love.

We start from a good position. Because, contrary to media myth, we’ve got plenty of undeveloped land to spare.

By overlaying satellite imagery onto Ordnance Survey maps, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology’s 2007 Land Cover Map shows that 8.9% of England is built up (or developed as gardens). That means that over 90% is not.

Our National Parks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty account for around 30% - more than three times the amount that is built on.

If we include the Green Belts that stop our cities sprawling without limit then in total around 40% of England is protected from development – more than four times the area that is built on.

Then there are ancient woodlands and other irreplaceable habitats which are protected by the National Planning Policy Framework, and other important sites which lie outside the official designations, but are rightly championed by organisations like the RSPB and the Woodland Trust. There is high quality agricultural land which all of us want to see used for the essential purpose of growing food.

And there are much loved open spaces in villages and towns, which local people understandably want to keep intact.

Nothing that I have said and nothing that this Government has done will undermine the protection of National Parks, SSSIs, AONBs and the Green Belt. Or stop good agricultural land being used for farming. Or prevent councils from identifying ancient woodland and green spaces that local people want to protect.

And nothing that I have said and nothing that this Government has done involves telling communities how many new houses they should accept or where they should be built.

Labour’s housing targets caused enormous resentment and failed to deliver the goods – by the end of their time in office house-building had fallen to its lowest peacetime level since the 1920s. So we have already revoked the regional strategy for the East of England. And, having considered the responses to the consultation on the environmental report, I have decided to revoke the equivalent edict for Yorkshire and the Humber (while saving the policies to protect York’s Green Belt.) I will be making decisions about the other regional strategies in due course, once the consultations on the other environmental reports have closed.

But the localism that Eric Pickles has unleashed is not a one-way street. As he has always said, with power comes responsibility. The National Planning Policy Framework spells it out very clearly. As they draw up their local plans, councils must assess their local housing need in an objective way. And

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they must identify immediately developable sites sufficient to supply all of the new homes that are needed over the next 5 years.

Many councils are embracing this duty with energy and imagination. But some are dragging their feet. And a few are looking for ways to evade their responsibilities – or slough them off onto their neighbours because the politics of house-building is too difficult. That is not acceptable. Councils which do not produce credible plans to meet local housing need will find that the presumption in favour of sustainable development will trump local decisions. And they will have to explain to local residents why their failure to produce a robust local plan exposed their communities to speculative development in places where it is not welcome. I will not defend and the Government will not support those local councils who abdicate their responsibility to meet their fair share of our common housing needs.

I am not going to pretend that it will be easy for them. Councillors will have to find a way to persuade the people who elect them that substantial further house-building is in the interest of the whole community, including those who are living there now.

But we are giving them the tools they need to go about this. The first thing that people want is input into the plans for development in their neighbourhood. And not just perfunctory consultation that is acknowledged but then ignored. But real involvement and a vote on the outcome. So that's why we've created the option of a neighbourhood plan, which is drawn up by representatives of a defined community and subject to a referendum of all their neighbours, before it can be finally adopted and form part of the statutory plan. 300 localities are already pursuing a neighbourhood plan - from Thame in South Oxfordshire to St James' ward in central Exeter and central Milton Keynes. The trailblazer is Upper Eden in Cumbria. Their neighbourhood plan will be the first to be put to the test in a local referendum in March of this year.

The second thing people want is a share in the benefits that new development can bring, whether that takes the form of a boost in the local authority's tax revenues or an investment in new community facilities or better infrastructure. So that's why we've introduced the New Homes Bonus that gives local councils over £8,000 over 6 years for every new Council Tax Band D home that gets built. Councils received £430 million in New Homes Bonus in 2012-13 and are provisionally set to receive £660 million in 2013-14.

But we need incentives that are even more local – so that the people who have to live with new housing developments get a direct benefit from them. So today I am pleased to be able to announce that in areas that charge the new Community Infrastructure Levy neighbourhoods which accept new development will get 15% of the revenues from the Levy (up to a maximum of £100 per existing household.)

And because I believe that neighbourhood plans are the key to unlocking more house-building, those communities that draw up a neighbourhood plan and have it approved by local people in a referendum will receive 25% of these revenues with no upper limit. If you want to re-roof your village hall, build a permanent home for your community shop, refurbish the municipal swimming pool, implement a new landscape design in your local park or save your local pub, look no further. Jump on the bandwagon and get yourself a neighbourhood plan.

This government believes in localism. We believe that if you give people power, they will use it responsibly. If you explain to them what their community and their country needs, they will do their bit to make sure it is provided. And if you give them a stake in a future in which beautifully designed

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homes with easy access to green space are, once again affordable for working people on ordinary wages, they will do what it takes to bring that future about.

From my perch on the lower branches at the Department for Communities and Local Government, I look around the Great Wood that is the British government and I see other ministers battering away at the barriers that hold people back with gusto and grit.

Iain Duncan Smith reforming the benefits system to ensure that work always pays.

Michael Gove giving schools control over their own destinies while ramping up the expectations of the standards that they will achieve for their students.

They are an inspiration and a goad. An inspiration because they are ministers who have identified a shocking injustice in the way our society works and are fearless in their determination to “spread the privilege” of a good education and a decent job.

A goad because we are more than half way through this Parliament, and it’s now up to me to make sure that our reformed planning system provides enough land to build the houses that England’s next generation so desperately needs.

When it does, I’m sure I will have no problem sleeping at nights.