

Brentwood Local Development Plan

Neighbourhood Consultation, May - June 2011



**Allies and Morrison
Urban Practitioners**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Brentwood Borough Council is preparing a new Local Development Plan. To inform the development of new planning policies the Council has undertaken a wide-ranging public consultation. As part of this process, and as a first step in taking localism forward in the borough, Urban Practitioners was commissioned to facilitate a series of 16 street consultation events and four stakeholder workshops.

These events took place during May and June 2011 with over 800 people taking time to visit street events and further groups attending workshops. Alongside this process the Council has undertaken a borough-wide questionnaire survey by post and online through the Council's website. This report presents findings from the consultation events. The findings of the questionnaire survey are set out in a separate report.

Consultation process

Street consultation events were identified as a proactive way of reaching people across the borough. A small marquee was specially created for the consultation with custom-made panels to advertise the presence of events and introduce key issues to visitors. The events were widely advertised to encourage people to attend, but by being on street in areas with high footfall the consultation team also managed to speak with many people who would not normally seek out planning consultations.

The consultation was launched on 7 May with an event on Brentwood High Street to coincide with the popular farmers market. A spread of morning, afternoon, evening and weekend events were undertaken to provide as many opportunities as possible for people to visit. Over 1,000 written comments were received through this process.

Stakeholder consultation events were held in Brentwood, Ingatestone and Shenfield and took the form of a placecheck workshop with local stakeholders. These provided an opportunity to consider the three main urban areas of the borough in greater detail and included walks around the local area as well as interactive workshops to consider key issues and priorities.

The Test and Review workshop at the conclusion of the programme provided an opportunity for local stakeholders to review the consultation data from each event and to identify any issues which they felt had been under-represented in the comments received. A workshop session then provided participants with the opportunity to provide their thoughts on the key messages which should inform the development of planning policy.

Consultation on the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) areas formed part of the process. Consultation materials included detailed plans of the areas of land assessed as part of the SHLAA to enable people to accurately consider the suitability of housing in particular areas and provide informed comment.





Key findings

This report records the extremely wide range of comments made during the course of the consultation events. These have been transcribed directly from written comments at each event and are presented in their entirety in this report, grouped into themes to aid analysis. A detailed breakdown of the key themes emerging from these comments is provided towards the end of section one of this report. Differences between comments from rural parts of the borough and those from urban areas are highlighted. Issues raised most frequently include the following:

- A recognition that affordable housing is needed in local areas, although this was often supported by a clear preference that this should be for local people;
- A general desire to protect local character. This included protection of the character of the built environment, the surrounding countryside and landscape including Green Belt, and a desire to avoid coalescence of existing settlements;
- A concern that infrastructure capacity is stretched. This is linked to preferences to limit new development or to only build where infrastructure exists to support it. Other people also noted a strong desire to see infrastructure delivery precede any development;
- A desire to see town centres thrive, with a good mix of shops and appropriate levels of parking. Residents in smaller centres are keen to maintain a core of local shops and facilities to make these communities sustainable;
- An understanding that the needs of young people in the area should to be considered, with suitable places and activities provided for them;
- A desire to see planning policy respond to the ageing population, particularly through housing which allows people to downsize whilst staying in the area thereby releasing larger family houses onto the market;
- A request that public transport provision should be improved in rural areas, and particularly the need for services to run at evening and weekends; and
- A desire to retain the Town Hall, although the presence of this as a significant issue can be attributed in part to the presence of a campaigner at several street events.

Published October 2011 by Brentwood Borough Council
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