Summary of Report on Neighbourhood Consultation Findings

1   Introduction

During May and June 2011, as part of our work towards preparing a new development plan for the Borough, Brentwood Council undertook a neighbourhood consultation. The purpose of the consultation was to give local residents and stakeholders an opportunity to put forward their views about issues that matter in their area, comment on possible housing numbers for the Borough and suggest priorities for the development plan.

The consultation comprised two elements: a short questionnaire and 20 consultation events. Consultation began on 7 May and ran until 1 July.

The consultation was widely advertised via leaflet drops to residents, the Council's website, posters displayed on public noticeboards throughout the Borough, press releases and adverts in local newspapers. Questionnaires were delivered to every household and available online, at the Town Hall, libraries and community events. As an incentive to respond, a prize draw offered respondents who returned a completed form the chance to win a £50 shopping voucher.

Around 2,000 questionnaire responses were returned. In addition, we received a further 460 letters and fourteen e mails. Around 1,000 people participated in street consultation events and workshops between them posting more than 1,000 comments.

This report presents the findings of the questionnaire survey analysis and related feedback by way of letter and e mails. A separate report *Brentwood Local Development Plan Neighbourhood Consultation,* (Brentwood Borough Council, October 2011) outlines the findings of the consultation events. The findings from both reports will inform work on a new Local Development Plan for the Borough.

2 Overview and Key Findings

1,954 completed consultation forms were returned. Out of these, 10 were duplicates or invalid. This leaves a total of 1,944 valid responses.

Consultation Questions

The consultation form asked respondents to state the neighbourhood they are commenting on, what they like and dislike about this place and any changes or improvements they would like to see. Respondents were then asked to indicate what they consider should be the priority for this neighbourhood in the Local Development Plan and finally, whether they agree with the East of England Plan proposed target for 170 new homes a year in the Borough as a whole over the next 15-20 years. The form provided guidance on each question.

Breakdown of responses

The breakdown of the 1,944 valid questionnaire responses received is as follows:

- 1,788 hard copies
- 148 online
- seven by email (excluding duplicates)
- one by letter (excluding duplicates)

In addition to questionnaires returned, the Council received 459 related letters and 14 e mails. These are mainly letters objecting to potential housing sites identified in the Borough's draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This assessment, carried out by independent consultants, assesses suggested land put forward for consideration by landowners and other interested parties, as well as sites already known to the Council. The letters mainly concern land in Doddinghurst, Mountnessing and Ingrave Road, south of Brentwood. A few letters from agents promoting land for development have also been received.

The majority of responses (around 90%) are from local residents. As is typical with this type of consultation the largest number of responses are from older residents. Some groups, particularly those aged between 19 and 24, are underrepresented. The exception to this is the excellent response from young people (under 19), who account for 238 responses (approximately 14% of responses).

Neighbourhood characteristics

Respondents identify between them 153 neighbourhoods. After discounting four which lie outside the borough this leaves 148 neighbourhoods. The following points are of note:

- Neighbourhoods identified by the largest number of respondents are Brentwood, Hutton, Ingatestone, Shenfield, Pilgrims Hatch, Kelvedon Hatch, West Horndon and Warley.
- 23 neighbourhoods are identified by more than ten people.
- The majority of neighbourhoods are identified by a small number of people.
- 98 neighbourhoods are identified by one person only

The size of neighbourhood people identify with varies, from a street or group of streets, to an estate, village, ward, town or parish; one respondent cites the borough as a whole, another, Thorndon Park.

What do you like about your neighbourhood?

A wide range of views are expressed. The most common answer, given by more than a quarter of respondents, is that their neighbourhood is 'peaceful' or 'quiet'. Parks and open spaces are highly valued with, again, more than a quarter of respondents noting these. Top likes based on number of responses, with the most common given first, are listed below. 13 rather than 10 items are listed because the same number of respondents note each of these features.

- peaceful/quiet
- parks/open spaces
- friendly people/neighbours
- shops
- countryside
- sense of community
- safe/low crime
- school/schools
- trees/green/leafy
- clean/tidy
- pleasant/attractive
- amenities/facilities/services

What do you dislike about your neighbourhood?

A wide range of views are expressed. The most common relate to traffic and speeding, which around a quarter of respondents report. 15% cite road and pavement related issues and 13% a lack of shops or poor quality provision. Top 10 dislikes, based on number of responses (most common first):

- traffic volumes and speeding
- poor condition of road/pavement
- poor quality/lack of shops
- litter
- lack of parking control
- insufficient traffic management/calming measures
- poor bus service
- too noisy
- lack of parking
- anti-social behaviour

What changes or improvements you would like to see?

As might be expected given answers to the previous question, the most common improvement sought by 20% of respondents relates to roads and pavements. Traffic management and calming measures are the second most common improvement sought by 17% of respondents.

14% of respondents seek more or better shops. Top 10 improvements sought, based on number of responses (most common first):

- road and pavement improvements
- traffic management and calming measures
- more or better shops
- better cleaning and maintenance
- more, better or cheaper parking
- a better bus service
- better policing/security
- youth facilities
- a cinema
- more and/or better sports, leisure and community facilities

What should be a priority for this neighbourhood for the development plan

The consultation form asked respondents to rank their top three priorities for their neighbourhood from a drop down list. *Protecting the Green Belt* is selected as a first, second or third priority for the largest number of respondents (911, 58%), followed by *Protecting Local Character, Historic Buildings and Landscapes* (687, 43%), P*rotecting Wildlife and Habitats* (416, 26%), Encouraging *Job and Business Opportunities* (392, 25%), *Improving Access and Transport* (389, 25%) and *Repairing and Re-Using Existing Buildings* (388, 25%). Around 300 respondents state their priorities, but do not rank them. Taking these responses into account *Protecting the Green Belt* remains the top priority (1088 respondents, 59%), followed by *Protecting Local Character, Historic Buildings and Landscapes* (835 respondents, 45%).

Analysis of responses by age reveals some differences between the views of young people under 19 and other respondents. For this group, the top priority is *Improving Access and Transport,* rather than *Protecting the Green Belt* followed by *Providing Affordable Housing and Encouraging Job and Business Opportunities.*

Housing Target

890 respondents (59%) disagree with the draft RSS housing target of 170 homes a year (as proposed by East of England Regional Assembly in the Draft East of England Plan, March 2010). 537 (35%) agree and 97 (6%) say they don't know. Out of those respondents who disagree 820 (92%) consider the target too high; 13 (1.5%) consider it too low.

The main reasons given by those who disagree with the housing target are concerns about infrastructure and transport, over-development and population and the need to protect the Green Belt, retain character and re-use existing buildings. Out of 313 respondents who suggest alternative targets 26 suggest a higher target, 282 a lower target.

Respondents who agree with the housing target share similar concerns with those who disagree, in particular with regard to protecting the Green Belt. The main reason given by those who say they don't know is lack of information.