

2022 - 2033



Housing Report for the Steeple Bumpstead Neighbourhood Plan

Dated October 2023

Foreword

This Housing Report was prepared as part of the evidence base for the Steeple Bumpstead Neighbourhood Plan. Its purpose is to explain how the Steering Group has considered the future housing requirements of Steeple Bumpstead and the conclusion that has been reached as to the appropriate level of growth over the Plan period.

As housing growth is addressed through the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans, it is clear that the development of housing related policies needs to be underpinned by robust and objectively assessed data in terms of local needs. As National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes clear, there is no exact science to establishing future housing needs, and no single approach will provide a definitive answer. The process will involve the gathering of information and facts, and making balanced judgements based on those facts.

The NPPG states that *"Plan makers should avoid expending significant resources on primary research (information that is collected through surveys, focus groups or interviews etc. and analysed to produce a new set of findings) as this will in many cases be a disproportionate way of establishing an evidence base. They should instead look to rely predominantly on secondary data (e.g. Census, national surveys) to inform their assessment which are identified within the guidance"*.

In line with this guidance, the Steering Group has sought to undertake a balanced review of the available evidence, as set out below.

Where there are references below to the Residents' Survey, the Appendix or other relevant documents, these are as attached to the overall Steeple Bumpstead Neighbourhood Plan.

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1. Statutory Framework

1.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) is the principal document in which national planning policies are contained. Paragraph 47 states that local planning authorities should use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies of the Framework. Government guidance is provided on the Planning Practice Guidance website.

1.2 District Plan

The local planning authority for the area is Braintree District Council (BDC).

The Braintree District Local Plan is formed of two parts: The strategic Section 1 (S1LP) which is shared by all three North Essex local authority areas of Braintree, Colchester, and Tendring, and the Section 2 (S2LP) providing policies only for Braintree District. The Section 1 Local Plan was adopted in February 2021, and setting out the overall housing requirement for the three local planning authorities. The Section 1 Plan includes policies on strategic cross boundary issues including infrastructure and housing numbers and includes proposals for three new Garden Communities. The Section 1 Local Plan identifies the objectively assessed need for Braintree as 716 new dwellings per year over the plan period of 2013 to 2033.

On 15 May 2020, Mr. Roger Clews (BA MSc DipEd DipTP MRTPI), the Inspector appointed as above, delivered a Post Hearing Letter on the emerging Local Plan, which is a shared plan with Tendring District Council and Colchester Borough Council. This Letter made a number of comments on aspects of the shared plan, particularly with regards to the viability of some of the Garden Communities which were proposed as part of the shared plan. While this Letter made a number of negative comments on the overall shared plan, the Inspector did formally reconfirm that the Objectively Assessed Housing Needs (AOHN) numbers contained within the shared plan remained appropriate (“...the Plan’s housing requirement figures remain soundly based.” - p11 of Inspector Clews’ letter). It therefore remains appropriate to refer to the AOHN numbers mentioned above.

Section 2 contains policies, maps and sites for development, housing, employment, regeneration etc within Braintree District Council. It was adopted on 25th July 2022.

1.3 Objectively Assessed Housing Needs (OAHN)

Braintree District Council has conducted a detailed Objectively Assessed Housing Need Study together with Chelmsford City Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council, the latest version of which is a November 2016 update conducted by Peter Brett Associates. This concluded that BDC would need to provide a total of 716 dwellings per annum over the Local Plan period (Table 8.1, p80).

2. Identifying a Housing Needs Target for the Plan

2.1 Objectively Assessed Housing Needs (OAHN)

In line with Braintree District Council's detailed Objectively Assessed Housing Need Study, over the period of this Neighbourhood Plan, Braintree District as a whole is expected to require a total of 8,592 new dwellings (716 x 12 years).

2.2 Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy

The Local Plan adopted a Spatial Strategy with a "settlement hierarchy" which is further articulated in BDC's Policy LPP16 which states that *"homes will be located primarily in the Main Towns and Key Service Villages..."*

The cumulative total for these "strategic growth locations" constitute the vast majority of the total expected number of dwellings to be built in Braintree District within the Plan period. In this context, it is crucial to note that Steeple Bumpstead does not fall into any of the priority categories for development identified above, but instead is defined in the Local Plan as a "Second Tier Village" (p78). Second Tier Villages are defined as *"those which may not serve a wider hinterland but provide the ability for some day to day needs to be met, although they lack the full range of facilities of a Key Service Village. Development of a small scale may be considered sustainable within a second tier Village, subject to the specific constraints and opportunities of that village."* This indicates that Steeple Bumpstead is considered as suitable only for small scale developments, rather than major developments, and even then subject to constraints.

2.3 Constraints to Development in Steeple Bumpstead

Relevant Recent Planning Inquiry

There was an extensive planning Inquiry held in July 2017 concerning a previously proposed major housing development just outside the village boundary, which was adjudicated by Julia Gregory BSc (Hons), BTP, MRTPI, MCMI, an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

The importance of this Inquiry in the context of assessing the constraints to development in Steeple Bumpstead is that a number of detailed reports were produced for this Inquiry from a variety of fully qualified experts in a range of relevant areas, including heritage, landscape and transport, and a number of these reports are included in the evidence base for this Neighbourhood Plan, as is Inspector Gregory's Decision. These reports, and Inspector Gregory's Decision, provide a robust and objective evidence base which clearly demonstrate a number of constraints to development in Steeple Bumpstead, as below.

Landscape Constraints to Development

Steeple Bumpstead lies within the Stour Valley Project Area (SVPA), which is the area covered by the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2021-26, the statutory Management Plan of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The SVPA is described in the Management Plan as "a cherished landscape by both residents and visitors. It has agriculture and wildlife at its core and everyone appreciates its scenic quality and beauty. The area is treasured and decisions impacting its landscape quality recognise its status as a valued landscape."

In her Decision published on 6 September 2017 relating to the major planning Inquiry referred to above, which refused planning permission for that development, Inspector Gregory described the landscape as a "valued landscape", which was identified as one of the major reasons why the appeal was dismissed.

Transport Constraints to Development

Like many rural villages, Steeple Bumpstead has narrow roads and lanes. Inappropriate parking is often a problem in the village e.g. across private driveways, on pavements, at junctions and in narrow roads. There is a perception that vehicles drive through the village too quickly, and pedestrians feel vulnerable in several places where they have to walk in the road. There are concerns about heavy goods vehicles driving through the village roads.

Private car ownership and use is high in Steeple Bumpstead. The Steeple Bumpstead area has a car driver mode share of 84.7%, which is significantly higher than the average for the Braintree District as a whole (69.9%), as shown in the following table using 2011 Census data:

Area	Mode of travel to work						
	car driver	walk	cycle	bus	train	m/c	car pass
Steeple Bumpstead	84.7%	4.2%	0.4%	1.2%	4.3%	0.9%	4.3%
Average for Braintree District	69.9%	10.9%	1.6%	2.4%	9.2%	0.7%	5.3%

This is mainly because of the very poor level of availability of public transport, or other forms of transport such as cycling, from the village to local destinations offering employment, retail and other facilities.

Steeple Bumpstead contains a number of local facilities. However, all higher order facilities, including bulk food retail, comparison shopping, cinemas, personal business, higher order leisure and sports facilities, hospitals, secondary education and other further and higher education require travel to surrounding urban areas including Haverhill, Saffron Walden, Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge.

In her Decision published on 6 September 2017 relating to the major planning Inquiry referred to above, which refused planning permission for that development, Inspector Gregory stated that "I acknowledge that frequency of rural public transport will not be the same as in urban areas, but the level of provision is so small as to be extremely limited. All but the most organised and determined persons would be dissuaded from using it".

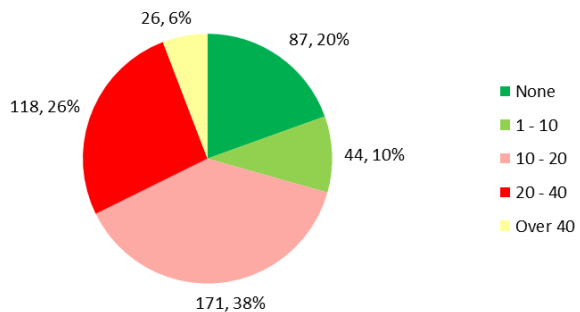
2.4 Community Views

The Steering Group has informed and consulted the community widely throughout the process. Engagement has included consultation events and a comprehensive Residents' Survey. This was distributed in September 2019 to all 1,280 local residents on the Electoral Register for the Parish, and completed Surveys were received back from 453 residents - a response rate of over 35%, unusually high for an exercise of this nature.

The Residents' Survey included a number of detailed questions about residents' housing needs and their preferences in terms of housing developments in the Parish.

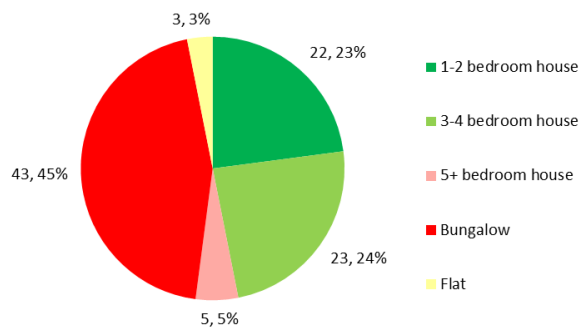
Residents had mixed views about the number of homes which would be needed in the village over the next 25 years, with the largest cohort of residents expressing a view that the number needed would be between 10 - 20 and a large number saying 20 - 40, but a significant minority (20%) saying that no new development was needed at all. Only 6% thought that more than 40 homes would be needed.

H11. Over the next 25 years, how many new homes do you think should be built in the village?



There were also a number of detailed questions in the Survey about residents' own future housing needs within the Parish. Only 65 residents expressed a "need to move to alternative accommodation within Steeple Bumpstead", which given that residents were asked to reply as individuals rather than as households, indicates that the total of numbers of households which have expressed a need to move is likely to be a lower (albeit unknowable) number.

H12. What type of home will you need in the village?



The type of housing required is also quite specific, with a very strong need identified for bungalows, and to a lesser extent for small homes (1 - 2 bedrooms) and family homes (3 - 4 bedrooms). This appears to be consistent with a desire for households to "downsize", likely as part of retirement plans. It is also clear that if an individual or household is seeking to "move to alternative accommodation" within the village, potentially to a smaller home, this in turn is likely to free up the accommodation currently occupied to new residents - in other words, residents' own future housing needs as expressed do not appear to indicate a requirement for net new housing supply within the village.

2.5 Housing Requirement Figure from Braintree District Council

On 31st March 2022 Steeple Bumpstead Parish Council wrote to Braintree District Council asking for a housing requirement figure for the Steeple Bumpstead Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of compiling this Neighbourhood Plan.

Braintree District Council replied on 25th April 2022 to indicate that: “The local authority is not able to provide a specific housing figure based on the Local Plan at this time as the draft publication Local Plan is at an advanced stage. However, in terms of an indicative figure, it would be considered appropriate for the Neighbourhood Plan to have a target which reflects the current level of sites proposed for or which have been granted planning permission for development in Steeple Bumpstead...”

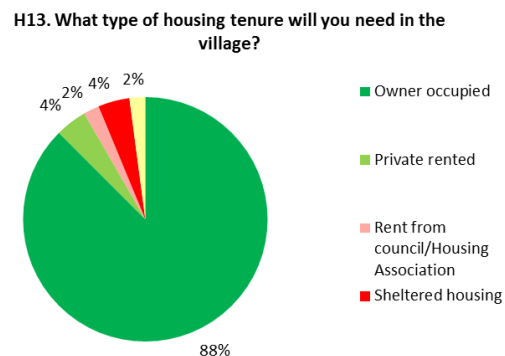
On this indicative basis, Braintree District Council indicated in the same letter that: “It is therefore considered appropriate that a minimum target of 4 homes per year... is appropriate.”

Over the 12-year period of the Neighbourhood Plan this equates to a total of 48 homes required in terms of an indicative housing requirement figure for the Steeple Bumpstead Neighbourhood Area. This is inclusive of, and not additive to, the level of existing commitments for future housing supply (see below).

2.6 Affordable Housing

There are 62 existing affordable homes in Steeple Bumpstead, including 54 Greenfields Community Housing homes and 8 Hastoe Housing Association homes at Banstock Field.

The Residents’ Survey indicated that where existing residents expect to have a future need to move to alternative accommodation within the village for themselves, almost all (88%) of this need is expected to be for owner occupied homes, with almost no need from residents for rented or sheltered housing.



According to the Key Housing Needs Statistics - Steeple Bumpstead - Snapshot: March 2022 produced by Housing StatNav (a partnership project between Greenfields Community Housing and Braintree District Council), there were only 6 households with a current address in the village as at March 2022 registered on Braintree District Council's system (Gateway to HomeChoice) waiting for housing association homes.

Taken together, this evidence appears to indicate that there is not a significant unmet need for affordable homes for rental in the village. Conversely, there was a very strong desire expressed by residents that where new affordable housing is developed, this should be offered at first occupation only to people with a local connection. This is addressed within the Plan.

2.7 Conclusions on a Housing Needs Target for the Plan

A simple "pro rata" allocation to Steeple Bumpstead, in line with the Parish's share of the District's total population (1.1%), would indicate that an unadjusted allocation for the Parish might be of the order of 95 dwellings ($8,592 \times 1.1\%$) over the period of the Plan.

However, it is clear that a significant adjustment needs to be made to the crude "pro rata allocation" of 95 dwellings identified above, to take account of the Parish's place within BDC's settlement hierarchy as set out in the Local Plan's Spatial Strategy and to reflect all the other constraints set out above.

In line with the approach set out under the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) that there is no exact science to establishing future housing needs, and no single approach will provide a definitive answer, the Steering Group's view is that it would be appropriate to make an adjustment of the order of somewhere between 25 - 50% to the crude figure of 95 dwellings identified above.

This would indicate that, based on the OAHN with an appropriate adjustment, housing needs within the Parish over the period of this Neighbourhood Plan are likely to fall somewhere in the range of approximately 47 - 71 dwellings ($95 \times 50\%/75\%$) over the period of the Plan.

This is consistent with the total of 48 homes required in terms of an indicative housing requirement figure for the Steeple Bumpstead Neighbourhood Area over the 12-year period of the Neighbourhood Plan, as communicated to the Steering Group by Braintree District Council.

3. Identifying Future Housing Supply for the Plan

3.1 Future Housing Supply - Identified within Local Plan

As part of the development of its Local Plan, Braintree District Council issued a Call for Sites from August and finishing on 24.10.2014, with further sites being accepted at later stages. A number of sites for potential residential development within the Parish were submitted to BDC in response, but only one of these was accepted and subsequently incorporated into BDC's assumed land supply for the purposes of its Local Plan. This was a site identified in BDC's Local Plan as STEB 395, and a full planning application was subsequently submitted on 21.3.2018 for this site to BDC as Application No. 18/00408/FUL. This was finally approved by BDC's Planning Committee on 17.12.2019.

This is a substantial development in terms of a village the size of Steeple Bumpstead, for 28 homes covering a range of units including flats and two, three and four bedroom houses.

3.2 Future Housing Supply - Existing Commitments

There are existing commitments for additional housing supply in the form of two significant planning permissions for housing sites already in place within the village, plus a number of single-dwelling commitments.

One is a site identified as Application No. 16/01525/OUT, for which a planning application was submitted on 6.9.2016. This was approved by BDC's Planning Committee on 12.1.2017. This will be a development of nine three bedroom houses (as yet unfinished).

The other is a site identified as Application No. 21/02009/OUT, for which a planning application was submitted on 20.12.2019. Permission for this was granted on appeal by M Chalk, an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State, on 15.1.2021. This will be a development of 7-9 dwellings (as yet unfinished).

3.3 Future Housing Supply - Windfall Sites

Windfall sites are those not specifically identified or allocated for housing in a local development plan. Most new developments within the village in recent years have been by piecemeal natural organic infill development on windfall sites.

In line with the principle of proportionality identified above, the Steering Group has not commissioned extensive research into evidence regarding historical rates of windfall development in the Parish. On this basis, although there has been and continues to be a steady supply of new housing from windfall sites within the village, a conservative assumption has been made of zero new additions from windfall sites over the Plan period (other than those existing commitments identified in the table under 3.4 below).

3.4 Future Housing Supply - Total

Braintree District Council has communicated to the Steering Group a spreadsheet of its own detailed “Full Housing Trajectory” of total identified housing supply in Steeple Bumpstead year by year over the period to 2033.

Taking the above into account, it is expected that the total supply of homes over the Plan period is likely to be around 49 homes, as set out below.

Site	Approximate Supply
STEB 395 / 18/00408/FUL	28
16/01525/OUT	9
21/02009/OUT	9
11/0949	1
21/00926/FUL	1
21/02541/FUL	1
Total	49

4. Conclusion

As set out in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), the Steering Group sought to make a balanced judgement based on the following identified factors:

On the question of likely future housing needs over the Plan period:

- Braintree District Council has communicated a total of 48 homes required in terms of an indicative housing requirement figure for the Steeple Bumpstead Neighbourhood Area over the 12-year period of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Based on the OAHN with an appropriate adjustment, housing needs within the Parish are likely to fall somewhere in the range of approximately 47 - 71 dwellings.
- Based on residents' expressed views on likely future housing needs, the largest cohort of residents expressed a view that the number of new homes needed would be between 10 - 20, and only 6% thought that more than 40 homes would be needed.

On the question of likely future housing supply over the Plan period:

- Based on the future housing supply already identified under the Local Plan and existing commitments of granted but unbuilt planning approvals, it is expected that the total supply of homes over the Plan period is likely to be around 49 homes.

Based on the above, the Steering Group concluded that there appeared to be strong evidence for a broad balance between likely future housing needs and likely future housing supply over the Plan period.

On this basis, and in line with the proportionate approach recommended by the NPPG, the Steering Group concluded that:

- There is no apparent need to identify specific sites within the Parish for additional housing developments.
- There is no apparent need for the Steering Group to commission a detailed Housing Needs Assessment from a professional firm.