

**Hatfield Peverel
Neighbourhood
Development Plan
Coalescence
Safeguarding Zone
Assessment**

November 2021

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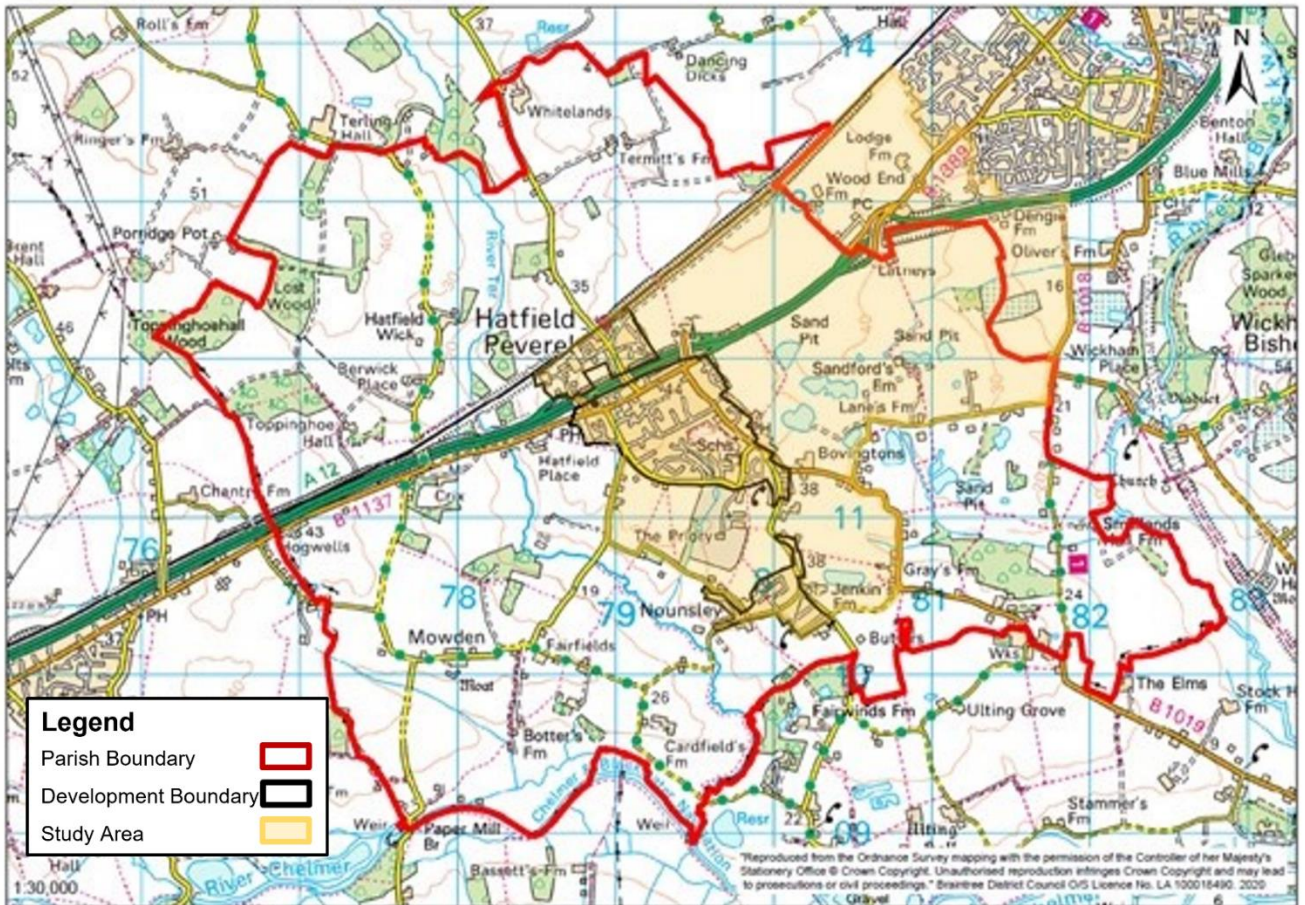
1. Introduction

1. The Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) was 'made' by Braintree District Council in March 2019. As the Plan is now over two years old, Hatfield Peverel Parish Council is updating the NDP and associated evidence base documents. To inform the update to the Plan, DAC Planning has been appointed to consider the need for Neighbourhood Plan policies to safeguard against the potential coalescence of settlements within the Parish and in neighbouring areas.
2. This report therefore assesses the need for additional protection through policies within the NDP to prevent the coalescence of Hatfield Peverel with the neighbouring settlements of Nounsley and Witham. Recent years have seen the emergence of an increasing number of development proposals located in the open countryside between the settlements of Hatfield Peverel, Nounsley and Witham. Collectively these proposals have the potential to increase the risk of coalescence between these settlements, which would be detrimental to the individual character of the villages, particularly through the loss of the surrounding open countryside and associated views
3. This report draws on national and local planning policy and local evidence base documents to assess the relevant planning policy context, development pressures in the area and potential impacts arising from existing and future planned developments. This report considers why the Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Plan Examiner proposed the removal of the Green Wedge Policy during the Neighbourhood Plan examination, reviews examples of how other neighbourhood plans in the area have sought to address concerns related to coalescence, considers relevant national and local planning policy, and examines development pressure in the area. The report concludes with recommendations on how the update to the Neighbourhood Plan should address concerns regarding coalescence in the area.

1.1 The study area

4. The study area presented in Figure # includes the settlements of Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley, and considers the open countryside between the two villages, and the open countryside to the east of Hatfield Peverel towards Witham, bounded by the railway line to the north. The Parish Council has identified the study area presented in Figure 1 as an area of concern for the potential for the coalescence of settlements to take place where further development proposals may come forward in the future.

Figure 1 Hatfield Peverel Parish and settlement boundaries. Study area indicated in yellow



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2. The removed draft Green Wedge Policy

5. The submission version of NDP contained Policy HPE1 Prevention of Coalescence, which was recommended for removal in the Examiner’s Report (2019)¹.
6. Policy HPE1 introduced three green wedges with the aim of preventing coalescence between settlements. The policy proposed green wedges along the eastern development boundary of Hatfield Peverel and the eastern boundary of the Parish to avoid coalescence with Witham, and a further green wedge proposed between Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley.

Figure 2: Removed Neighbourhood Plan Policy HPE1

HPE1 Prevention of Coalescence
<p>A green wedge will be created along the eastern development boundary of Hatfield Peverel and at the eastern boundary of the Parish with Woodend Farm to avoid coalescence with Witham.</p> <p>A similar green wedge will be created that will preserve the open space between the built area of Hatfield Peverel and the hamlet of Nounsley.</p> <p>In these areas the following development will be permitted provided it maintains the open nature of the area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Agricultural purposes ◇ Outdoor recreation and sports facilities ◇ Cemeteries ◇ Replacement of existing building ◇ Redevelopment of previously developed land ◇ Transport infrastructure ◇ Utilities (e.g. power, water, gas, sewage) ◇ Developments brought forward under a Community Right to Build to Order

¹ Report on Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015-2033, Mary O’Rourke, 2019.

Figure 3: Removed policy HPE1 Prevention of Coalescence Areas



7. The Examiner’s Report for the NDP determined Policy HPE1 did not meet the basic conditions as the green buffers were not sufficiently evidenced, were not situated along defensible boundaries, created ambiguity with a focus on landscape and did not align with local planning policy.

2.1 Conclusions from the previous approach

8. Based on the conclusions of the Examiner’s Report, an alternative approach to producing an acceptable prevention of coalescence related policy would need to address the following issues:
 - Producing a less restrictive policy, which allows development to take place on land between the settlements of Witham, Hatfield Peverel, and Nounsley through a carefully assessed, managed, and controlled approach which seeks to assess and monitor the potential implications for coalescence, and where necessary refuse proposals where the development would result in the coalescence of settlements;
 - Presenting a clearly defined, identifiable, sensible, and defensible boundary for an identified coalescence safeguarding area / zone;
 - Producing a less ambiguous policy which focuses on the key issue of concern regarding coalescence between settlements; and
 - Producing an evidence based policy, where there is sensible and clear reasoning and justification for the proposed safeguarding area.

3. Relevant case studies

9. This section outlines made neighbourhood plan policies from the surrounding area which seek to protect existing settlements from the potential for coalescence, and may therefore assist in the development of a similar policy for the update to the NDP.

3.1 Coggeshall Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2033

10. Coggeshall Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2033 Policy 7 Green Buffers identifies four ‘green buffers’ to assist in preventing coalescence and preserve the setting and character of the historic village and its open countryside. The neighbourhood area includes several settlements, Coggeshall village, Coggeshall Hamlet and Little Nunty’s, and the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maintain their separate identity from the larger village of Coggeshall. The Neighbourhood Plan requires development proposals within the green buffer areas to ensure that the potential for coalescence between settlements is acknowledged and mitigated.

Figure 4: Coggeshall Neighbourhood Plan Green Buffers



11. The Examiner’s Report (2020)² concluded that the Policy responded to consultation concerns regarding the loss of identity between settlements and the approach complements that of emerging Braintree District Local Plan (BDLP) Policy LPP72: Green Buffers. The green buffers were supported by an assessment for their contribution to a range of criteria: setting, identity, ecological, amenity and landscape value. The examiner retained within the Neighbourhood Plan only the setting and identity criteria. The examiner concluded the buffers were justified to protect the identity and setting of existing settlements and follow logical boundaries along established features.

² Coggeshall Neighbourhood Plan Report to Braintree District Council of the Independent Examination, Tony Burton, 2020.

3.2 Coalescence between Cressing Parish and the town of Braintree, Cressing Parish Neighbourhood Plan evidence base document

12. DAC Planning produced the Cressing Parish Neighbourhood Plan evidence base document 'Coalescence between Cressing Parish and the town of Braintree'³, to inform the inclusion of a buffer area in the Cressing Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2033. The Report considered development pressures and important environmental features to assess the need for additional protection, and identified the proposed buffer area. Development pressures between the town of Braintree and Cressing village were a concern for the rural character of the area.
13. The report identified the potential for coalescence within land between Braintree and Cressing village, and therefore proposed an 'open countryside buffer' area for the north western area of the Parish to manage the impacts of development on the rural character of the area and the potential for the coalescence of the settlements. The buffer area was located adjacent to the urban fringe of Braintree town and the northern edges of the villages of Tye Green and Cressing. The buffer area also sought to protect identified environmental features.
14. The recommendations of the 'Coalescence between Cressing Parish and the town of Braintree' report were incorporated into Cressing Neighbourhood Plan (CNP) Policy 3 Maintaining the Character and Integrity of the Parish, and included an Open Countryside Buffer Area to maintain the character of Cressing Parish and retain settlement separation between Braintree and Cressing. The Policy required development proposals within the buffer area to produce a visual impact assessment, and mitigate the impacts of new development proposals on the character and appearance of the area.
15. The Examiner's Report (2019)⁴ for the CNP assessed Policy 3 and concluded that the Open Countryside Buffer Area was justified due to the identified development pressures on the area, the proximity of the settlements, and the identification of defensible boundaries. It was also noted that the approach was consistent with emerging Braintree District Local Plan (BDLP) Policy LPP72 for Green Buffers. Additionally, the examiner noted that the Policy did not seek to stop all development in the area, and instead sought to manage development proposals within the buffer area to determine any impacts on coalescence and the character of the area.
16. In December 2020, planning application 18/00549/OUT for 250 dwellings was allowed on appeal within the Open Countryside Buffer Area. The appeal decision acknowledged that the proposed development would result in the 'harmful loss of countryside', 'moderate' harm to the character and appearance of the area, and would fail to maintain the existing physical gap between Braintree and Tye Green village. For these reasons the Inspector concluded that the proposed development would be in conflict with CNP Policy 3, however the development was allowed where the Inspector placed greater weight on the importance of meeting local housing needs in the area.
17. The requirements of CNP Policy 3, relating to the Open Countryside Buffer Area, were applied within the decision making processes both by Braintree District Council and the Appeal Inspector,

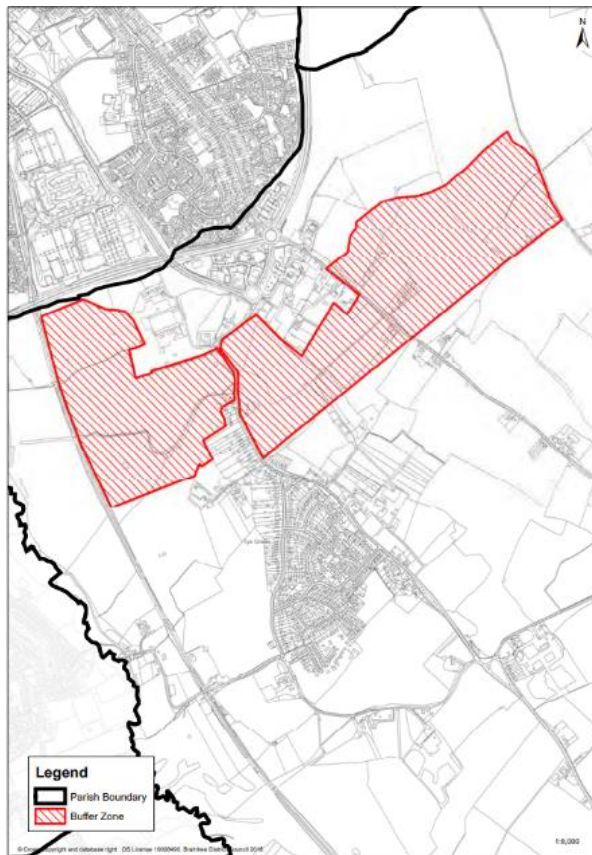
³ Coalescence between Cressing Parish and the town of Braintree, DAC Planning, 2019. Also referred to as the Cressing Parish Coalescence Report, available at:

<https://sites.google.com/view/creasingneighbourhoodplan/evidence-base-documents>

⁴ Cressing Neighbourhood Plan Report to Braintree District Council of the Independent Examination, Tony Burton, 2019.

to consider the impacts of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, and to consider the potential impacts on the coalescence of settlements.

Figure 5: Crossing Parish Open Countryside Buffer Area



3.3 Salings Neighbourhood Plan Local Landscape Protection Zone Topic Paper

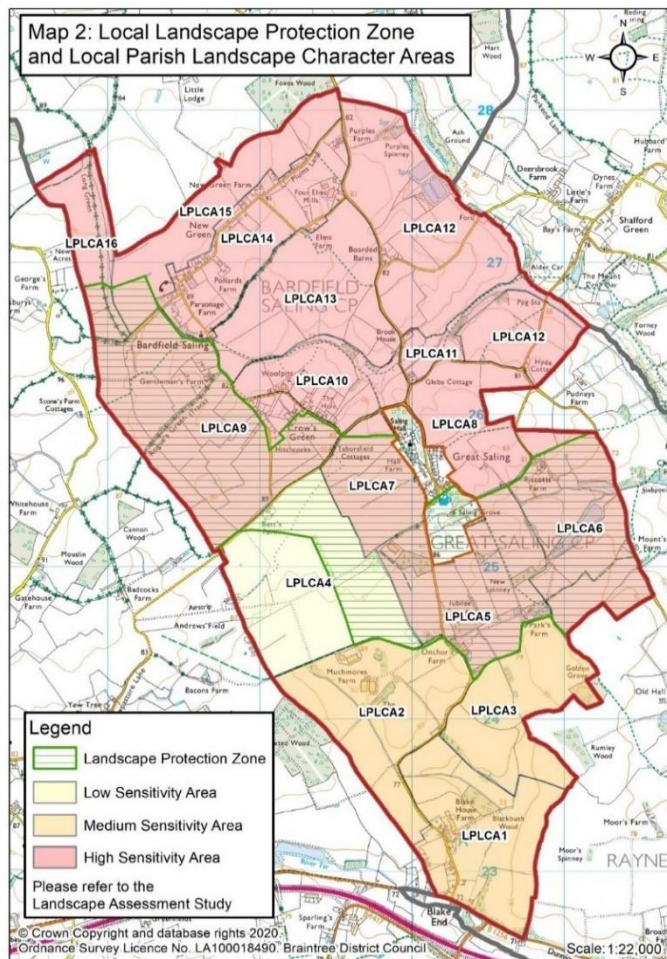
18. The Salings Neighbourhood Plan Local Landscape Protection Zone Topic Paper⁵ (SNP LLPZ Report) proposed a Local Landscape Protection Zone for inclusion in the Salings Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2034. The Salings, north west of Braintree, includes the two villages of Great Saling and Bardfield Saling.
19. The Local Landscape Protection Zone sought to manage potential detrimental impacts associated with the rural character and appearance of the area and concerns regarding coalescence from development proposals relating to the West of Braintree Garden Community, a new settlement of between 7,000 to 10,000 new dwellings, proposed to the south of the Salings within the emerging draft BDLP. The LLPZ followed defensible boundaries, including lanes, field boundaries, identified Local Parish Landscape Character Area boundaries, roads, the Parish boundary, settlement boundaries, and the proposed location of the Garden Community.
20. The Inspectors Report to the North Essex Authorities Strategic Section 1 Local Plan recommended the removal of the proposed West of Braintree Garden Community, which therefore removed potential impacts to the area requiring the inclusion of the LLPZ within the Neighbourhood Plan.

⁵ The Salings Neighbourhood Plan Local Landscape Protection Zone Topic Paper, DAC Planning, February 2020, available at <https://salings-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/LLPZ-Topic-Paper-FINAL-DAC-Planning.pdf>

However, the made Salings Neighbourhood Plan has retained policy requirements associated with coalescence protection within Policy SAL 2 Conserving our Landscape and its Key Ecological Features. Policy SAL 2 states that ‘within the local landscape character areas...development proposals in areas of high, medium and low sensitivity will be supported where they will not lead to coalescence between existing settlements’. The made Salings Neighbourhood Plan has therefore defined areas of the Parish where the potential risks of coalescence should be assessed within development proposals.

21. The Local Plan Landscape Character Areas referred to within Policy SAL 2 are presented within figure 6 below, alongside the proposed LLPZ.

Figure 6: The Salings Local Landscape Protection Zone with landscape character areas



3.4 Case study conclusions

22. Drawing on the examples presented in this section, a coalescence safeguarding related policy should be based on evidence of development pressures in an area where settlements are within close proximity of each other, and should demonstrate the potential for new development to result in coalescence and detrimental impacts on existing character of the area. Proposed safeguarding zone boundaries should follow identifiable and defensible boundaries. Finally, the related policy should seek to manage development within an area for the purposes of protecting existing settlement character, rather than seeking to restrict new development proposals for the purposes of protecting the open countryside.

4. Planning policy context

4.1 National planning policy

23. Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) states that planning should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Paragraph 130 states that policies should ensure that developments are 'sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting'.

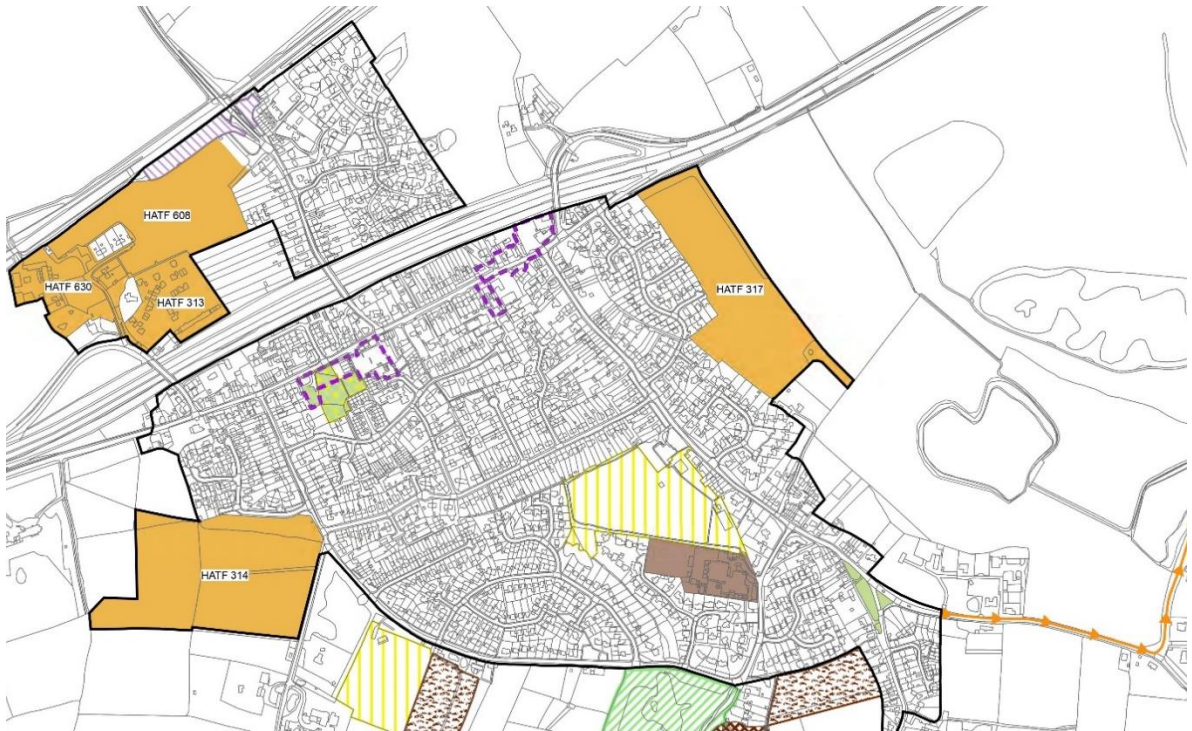
4.2 Local planning policy

24. The statutory Development Plan for the District currently consists of the Local Plan Review (LPR) adopted in 2005 and a Core Strategy adopted in 2011. The Publication Draft (Regulation 19) Braintree District Section 2 Local Plan (BDLP) was published in summer 2017 and submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in October 2017. Hearings for the Section 2 Plan were held in July 2021.
25. Core Strategy Policy CS5 The Countryside seeks to control development in the countryside 'in order to protect and enhance the landscape character and biodiversity, geodiversity and amenity of the countryside'. Core Strategy Policy CS8 Natural Environment and Biodiversity seeks to protect and enhance the natural environment, habitats and biodiversity, and geo-diversity of the District, to ensure that development proposals have regard to 'the character of the landscape and its sensitivity to change'.
26. BDLP Policies relevant to the issues being considered within this report and to Hatfield Peverel include Policy SP 3 Spatial Strategy for North Essex and Policy SP 7 Place Shaping Principles in Section 1, and Policy LPP 1 Development Boundaries, Policy LPP 31 and Policy LPP 72 Green Buffers in Section 2.
27. Regarding future growth, Policy SP 3 states that it will be planned to ensure existing settlements maintain their character, to avoid coalescence. Policy SP 7 encourages new development to respond to local character.
28. Policy LPP 1 states that development falling outside of development boundaries will be strictly controlled to uses appropriate to the countryside to protect the countryside's character and beauty. Policy LPP 72 identifies four green buffers around Braintree, Great Notley, Witham and between Sible and Castle Hedingham, to prevent coalescence between villages. Policy LPP 31 designates a Comprehensive Redevelopment Area on land between the A12 and GEM1, 71 Hatfield Peverel. The redevelopment area covers allocations HATF313 Sorrels Field Bury Lane, HATF630 Hatfield Bury Farm Bury Lane and HATF608 Former Arla Dairy site. The BDLP also allocates HATF315 / 316 Land at Wood End Farm and WITC423 Land at Lodge Farm in Hatfield Peverel/Witham.
29. BDLP examination document *SDBDC/008a (1/3) Further Suggested Changes to the Local Plan*⁶ proposed a series of amendments to the Hatfield Peverel settlement boundary. Modifications M78 and M79 propose amendments to include site allocations HATF317 Land north east of Gleneagles Way and HATF314 Land south of Stonepath Drive to reflect recent

⁶ SDBDC008a(1/3) Further Suggested Changes to The Local Plan, Braintree District Council, May 2021. Available at: <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/planning-building-control/section-2-examination-local-plan/6>

approved planning applications. Further amendments relating to Hatfield Peverel are presented in Appendix 1.

Figure 7: Detail of Inset Map 36 for proposed housing allocations in Hatfield Peverel from the BDLP



5. Assessment of the study area

5.1 Development pressures

30. As outlined in table 1 below, the BDLP allocates a total of 481 dwellings in Hatfield Peverel. The allocations are concentrated to the north of the A12 and on the eastern and western edges of Hatfield Peverel. The Plan also allocates 1,200 dwellings on the western edge of Witham.

Table 1: BDLP allocations within the study area

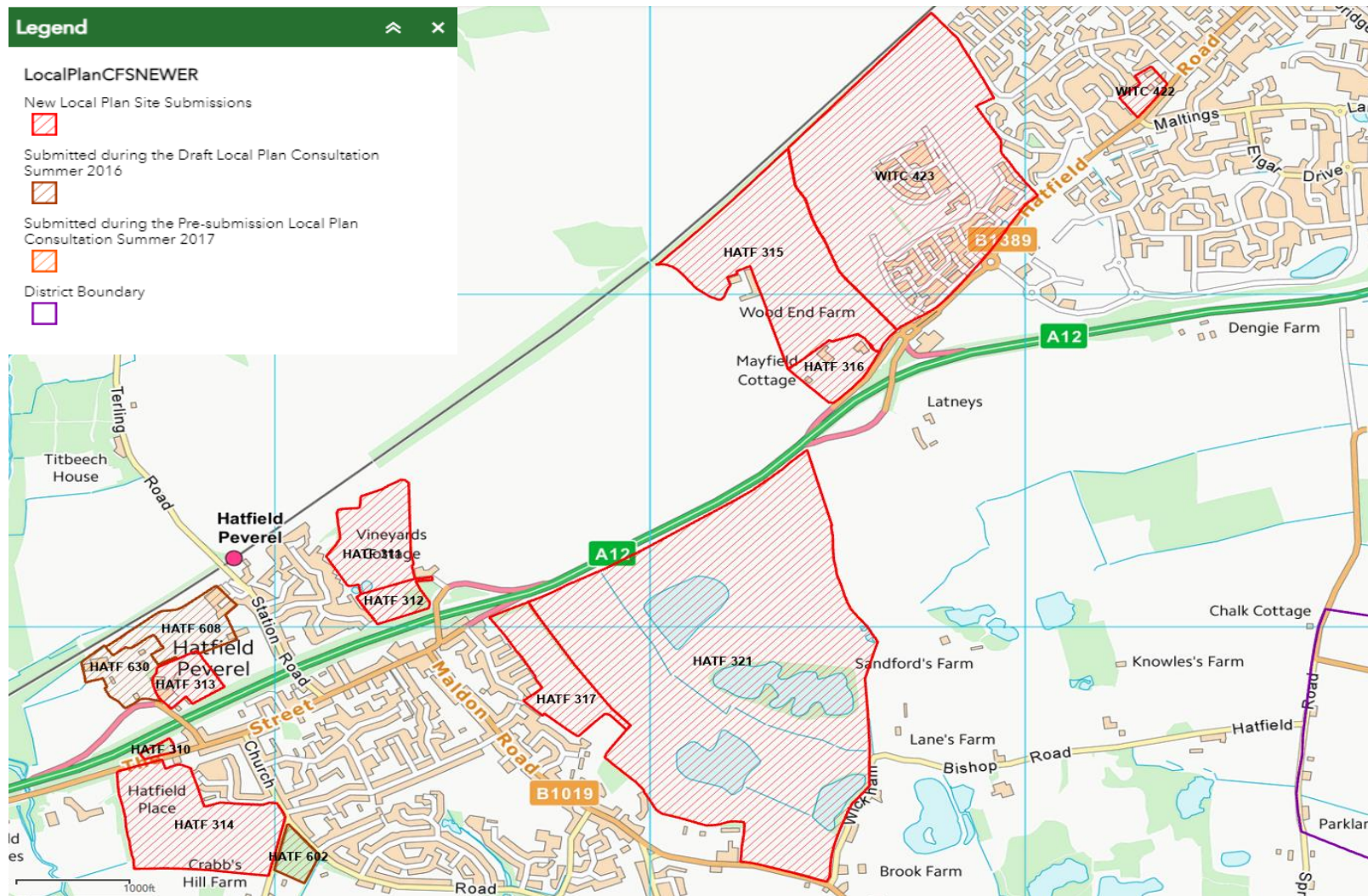
Allocation	Capacity	Related planning application	Dwellings	Status
Allocations for land on the edge of Hatfield Peverel				
HATF313 Sorrells Field Bury Lane	45 dwellings	17/00973/FUL 19/01900/NMA	50 dwellings	Under construction
HATF630 Hatfield Bury Farm Bury Lane	51 dwellings	17/0341/OUT 19/01803/FUL 20/01606/DAC 20/01607/DAC 20/01608/DAC 21/00750/DAC	46 dwellings	Approval August 2020
HATF608 Former Arla Dairy Site	142 dwellings	16/02096/OUT 19/0494/REM	145 dwellings	Under construction
HATF317 Land north east of Gleneagles Way	100 dwellings	15/01361/OUT	145 dwellings	Refused
		16/2156/OUT 19/01710/DAC 20/00906/REM 20/00945/DAC 20/01058/DAC 20/01059/DAC 20/01060/DAC 21/02916/VAR	100 dwellings	Reserved matters approved February 2021. Removal of Condition 9, variation of Conditions 16 and 18 pending consideration
HATF314 Land south of Stonepath Drive	140 dwellings	16/1813/OUT 20/00002/S106A 20/00004/S106A 20/01233/DAC 20/01329/VAR 20/01906/REM 20/02237/DAC 20/01988/DAC	140 dwellings	Approval May 2021
Allocations for land between Hatfield Peverel/Witham				
HATF315 and HATF316 Land at Wood End Farm, Witham	450 dwellings	19/01896/OUT	400 dwellings	Pending consideration
WITC423 Land at Lodge Farm, Witham	750 dwellings	15/00430/OUT	750 dwellings	Approval May 2016, under construction

31. The sites presented in table 2 were submitted to Braintree District Council (BDC) for consideration for allocation within the Local Plan and inclusion in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment through the Call for Sites in 2014, and through ongoing engagement with developers and landowners. The sites are further illustrated in figures 8 and 9, which demonstrates the extent of land between the settlements of Hatfield Peverel and Witham and Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley being promoted to BDC as potential future sites for development. Figure 8 demonstrates that if all potential development land was allocated between Hatfield Peverel and Witham, the two settlements would only be separated by junction 21 of the A12.

Table 2: Potential development sites submitted to Braintree District Council within the study area

Site Reference	Site Address	Year Submitted
HATF310	Land adj Walnut Tree Cottage, The Street, Hatfield Peverel	2014
HATF311	The Vineyards, Hatfield Peverel CM3 2EF	2014
HATF312	Part of The Vineyards, Hatfield Peverel	2014
HATF313	Sorrells Field, Bury Lane, Hatfield Peverel	2014
HATF314	Land South of The Street, Hatfield Peverel	2014
HATF315	Land at Woodend Farm, London Road, Witham	2014
HATF316	Land at Woodend Farm, including Mayfield Nursery, London Road, Witham	2014
HATF317	Land off Gleneagles Way, Hatfield Peverel	2014
HATF318	Land to south east of Sportsman's Arms PH, Sportsmans Lane, Nounsley	2014
HATF319	Land to the south of London Road (east of Ambleside), Hatfield Peverel	2014
HATF320	Land adj Badgers Oak, Nounsley Road, Nounsley	2014
HATF321	Land between Hatfield Peverel & Witham South of A12	2014
HATF322	Land at Nounsley Road, south of Oakford Farm, Nounsley	2014
WITC423	Land at Lodge Farm, Witham	2014
HATF514	Land adj Casa Feliz, Manor Road, Nounsley	2015
HATF515	Land adj Hawthorns, Peverel Avenue, Nounsley	2015
HATF602	Site bounded by Church Road & Crabbs Hill, Hatfield Peverel	2016
HATF608	Arla Dairy, Station Road, Hatfield Peverel	2016
HATF609	Land Between Hatfield Peverel Cricket Club & Sportsmans Lane, Hatfield Peverel	2016
HATF630	Bury Farm, Bury Lane, Hatfield Peverel	2016
HATF643	Land West of Ulting Road, Nounsley	2016

Figure 8: Braintree District Council Call for Sites 2014-2017, land between Hatfield Peverel and Witham⁷



⁷ Call for Sites interactive Map, Braintree District Council, <https://braintree.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=32aba010933f47a49bec9c2da8b287c9>

Figure 9: Braintree District Council Call for Sites 2014-2017, land between Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley⁸



⁸ Call for Sites interactive Map, Braintree District Council, <https://braintree.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=32aba010933f47a49bec9c2da8b287c9>

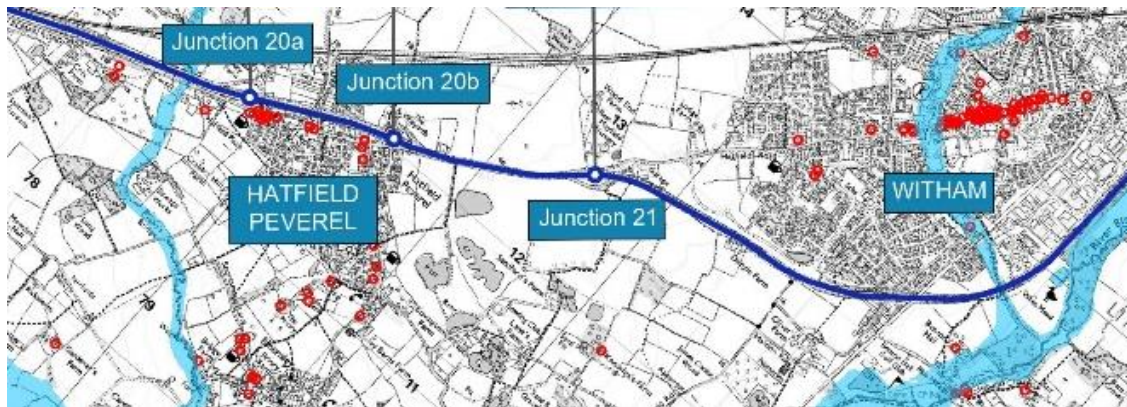
32. Recent applications in the study area for the development of 3 or more dwellings listed in the table below demonstrate the extent of new development being considered in the area.

Table 3: Recent planning applications in the study area from 2015-2021 for 3 or more dwellings

Application Ref Number	Approval Date	Proposal	Dwellings
18/0851/FUL 19/1970/VAR 19/02037/DAC 20/00211/DAC	Appeal allowed May 2019, under construction	The Heathers, The Wheatsheaf, The Green	7 dwellings
20/01465/FUL	Approval March 2021	Land to the rear of Heathers and Candletree, the Green	7 dwellings
20/01264/OUT	Pending Decision	Land North of Maldon Road	110 dwellings
21/02857/OUT	Pending Decision	Small Acres Maldon Road	17 dwellings
17/01726/FUL	Refused	Land north east of Sportsmans Lane	3 dwellings
15/00064/NMA	Approved 2016	South side of Maltings Lane, Witham, Left of Chipping Hill Primary School	135 dwellings
15/00134/DAC	Granted 2015	Home Farm Howbridge Hall Road, Witham	5 dwellings

33. The Hatfield Peverel area is proposed to experience significant future infrastructure improvements through the A12 widening scheme between junction 19 Boreham Interchange to junction 25 Marks Tey Interchange. A preliminary design consultation ran from June 2021 to August 2021 and construction is scheduled to begin in 2023. The scheme proposes removing junctions 20a and 20b which run through Hatfield Peverel and replacing them with a new junction 21 to the east of Hatfield Peverel, halfway towards Witham. The new junction 21 is proposed to be located within the study area, and would therefore be likely to result in changes to the area surrounding existing junction 21.

Figure 10: Proposed A12 widening scheme junction 21.



5.2 Landscape

34. Hatfield Peverel is located 2 miles from Witham to the east, with Nounsley located $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the south. The River Ter runs through the Parish before joining the River Chelmer to the south in the Chelmer Valley. To the east is the Blackwater Valley. Hatfield Peverel is a large village surrounded by agricultural land and river valley slopes, including well established hedgerows and lakes to the east. To the south, open farmlands and fields separate Hatfield Peverel from Nounsley, a hamlet with a distinctly rural character.
35. The Hatfield Peverel Local Landscape Character Assessment (2015)⁹ assesses the Parish through four sub areas identified in the Braintree Landscape Character Assessment (2006)¹⁰. The sub areas are Terling Farmland Plateau, Boreham Farmland Plateau, Blackwater River Valley, and the Lower Chelmer River Valley. The Farmland Plateau landscapes are formed of rolling farmland and fields, interspersed by narrow lanes, scattered settlements and small woods. The River Valley landscapes are shaped of valley slopes and fields along the valley floor.
36. The Local Landscape Character Assessment identifies ten local landscape character areas, five of which are located in the study area. The River Ter South landscape character area to the south west of the Parish extends from the A12 to the north of Nounsley and is characterised by small to medium fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and trees including alder, willow and oak. To the east of the River Ter South Area is Sportsman Lane, lounging the southern border of Hatfield Peverel and composed of undulating farmland and parkland dotted by bodies of water. This area is also home to Hatfield Peverel Priory, a slightly sloped 15ha garden designed in 1765 registered within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens for its special historic interest. The Grade II* St Andrew's Parish Church, a 12th Century church altered in the 13th and 15th centuries is situated to the north of the Priory. The Jenkins Lane character area wraps around the eastern border of Nounsley and is formed of mixed farmland.
37. The land east of Hatfield Peverel is characterised by valley slopes with lakes in Wickham Bishops Road character area. Farmland to the north falls eastwards where it joins the valley slopes of the River Blackwater. The area is characterised by broad open views across farmland. Beyond this area is the River Blackwater formed of lower valley slopes stretching towards Witham to the north. The fringes of Witham are visible from northern sections of the River Blackwater area.

⁹ Hatfield Peverel Local Landscape Character Assessment, The Landscape Partnership, 2015

¹⁰ The Braintree District Landscape Character Assessment, CBA, September 2006

38. Hatfield Peverel Parish is formed of undulating landscape shaped by valley slopes and open views across fields which provide a rural character to the area. Within the study area to the east and south of Hatfield Peverel the landscape is predominantly flat and open, with long distance views broken only by dense hedgerows and trees. Any development within this area would therefore be likely to be visible from long distances. Depending on the time of year and subject to the height of the development, existing hedgerows and trees would be likely to assist in screening development within parts of the study area from views of the countryside extending out from the villages of Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley.

5.3 Character of the area

39. The origins of Hatfield Peverel likely stretch to Roman times or earlier. The village is located near the Roman road which ran between London and Colchester, a road now largely followed by the A12. The settlement of Hatfield is mentioned in the Domesday Book (1066) for 78 households, a substantial size at the time. The village was subsequently referred to as Hatfield Peverel, after the Peverel family. The Norman knight Ranulph and his son William were feudal barons holding land in Hatfield Peverel. The Peverel family founded a college for secular canons in the village, which was later changed into a Benedictine priory until the Dissolution when it was significantly demolished. The priory grounds remain in private ownership. Adjacent to the priory is the Norman church St Andrew's Parish Church.
40. Development in Hatfield Peverel was historically concentrated along the A12 and clustered around the priory. The opening of the train station in the 1840s brought increased passage through Hatfield Peverel and the arrival of new residents looking to commute to London and nearby towns for work. By the second half of the 20th century, the village had expanded in a nucleated settlement pattern. Economic activity in the Parish is concentrated on The Street and Maldon Road.
41. Hatfield Peverel is a historic village with a settlement pattern focused inwards towards The Street and Maldon Road, and with a rural character which provides regular views and connections to the surrounding open countryside. Hatfield Peverel's character sets it apart from the smaller village of Nounsley. Separated by open agricultural fields and registered historic parkland, the two settlements are distinguished by a separate history and development pattern. Nounsley has a distinctly rural character, with low density dispersed development and regular views and connections to the surrounding open countryside and the dispersed field patterns with medieval origins.

5.4 Conclusions from the assessment

42. This assessment has identified that there are development pressures on the open countryside between Hatfield Peverel and Witham, as demonstrated by Local Plan site allocations, sites submitted to the BDC Call for Sites as potential development land, and recently approved planning applications. Proposed development associated with the construction of A12 junction 21 within the study area will also result in changes to the area which may reduce the separation between the two settlements.

43. Recent planning applications indicate the risk of increased development pressure along Wickham Bishops Road, between Hatfield Peverel and Witham. Additionally, Call for Site submission HATF321 demonstrates the potential for significant expansion eastwards from Hatfield Peverel to Witham, reducing the open space between the settlements. Recent development infill along Maldon Road with planning applications 18/0851/FUL and 20/01456/FUL indicates interest in development emanating eastwards from Hatfield Peverel.
44. The review of site allocations and development proposals in the area identified that there is limited development pressure between Nounsley and Hatfield Peverel. This is likely to be due in part to the existence of historic designations, graveyards, and allotments in the area.
45. There is significant ongoing pressure for development between Hatfield Peverel and Witham, with an identifiable risk of coalescence of the settlements should further major development take place in the area. While development pressures between Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley are limited, the close proximity of the settlements would result in a significant risk in coalescence of the settlements should any major development take place within the study area. The parkland and agricultural fields between the settlements are critically important in maintaining the openness of the countryside and the rural character of the area. The loss of the open countryside areas from large scale development within the study area would therefore have a significant impact on the characters of Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley.
46. While risks have been identified from large scale development proposals in the study area, it should be noted that new development could take place within the study area without the coalescence of settlements occurring and without significant harm to the character of the area. However, there is a limit to the size and scale of development which can take place in the study area before the area is compromised, and coalescence and loss of character starts to occur.
47. The impacts upon the potential for coalescence and harm to the character of the area would be dependent upon the distance between the settlements, the approach to screening development through vegetation, the size and scale of the development, the design of the development, and the topography of the site. A policy within the update to the NDP could therefore be used to guide, manage and control the potential for coalescence and harm resulting from new development proposals within the study area.

6. Proposed approach to drafting a new Neighbourhood Plan policy

48. The assessment in sections 2 to 5 above has identified the potential for the coalescence of settlements in the area, and harm to the character of existing settlements, without sufficient safeguards existing in the Local Plan. A policy within the NDP should therefore provide the additional tools required in the area to appropriately manage the impacts of development on the character and appearance of the study area.
49. It is recommended that the proposed policy takes a different approach from the previous coalescence related Policy HPE1 removed from the NDP at examination, to take into account and seek to address the issues with the previous policy. Based on the conclusions of section 2 above, it is therefore recommended that the NDP presents:
- a less restrictive policy, where some development can take place on the land between Witham and Hatfield Peverel and Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley in a carefully assessed, managed and controlled way, taking into accounts the potential for the coalescence of settlements;
 - a clearly defined, identifiable, sensible, and defensible area within which the requirements of the policy apply;
 - a less ambiguous policy which focuses on the key issue of concern regarding coalescence between neighbouring settlements; and
 - an evidence based policy with supporting material which clearly justifies the approach taken within the policy.
50. The policy should recognise development pressures in the study area and seek to manage the impacts of future planning applications on the potential for the coalescence of settlements, and ensure development is appropriately sensitive in design, size and scale.
51. To clarify the aims and objectives of the policy and to remove any ambiguity on its purpose, it is recommended that the policy area should be called the 'Coalescence Safeguarding Zone'. This provides absolute clarity that the purpose of policy requirements within the identified area is to safeguard the existing settlements from coalescing. The proposed draft policy is presented in figure 11 below.
52. The area where the coalescence safeguarding zone (CSZ) policy requirements apply should have clearly defined and defensible boundaries. The proposed zone presented within figure 12 therefore follows features such as the railway line, roads, established hedgerows, the identified settlement boundaries and the Parish boundary, within the parts of the study area considered at most significant risk from coalescence based on the distance of the settlements and the assessment of development pressures in the area.
53. The proposed Zone between Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley follows the boundary of the registered historic parkland from Church Road to Sportsmans Lane, the Nounsley settlement boundary, and established hedgerows and field boundaries in the east towards Maldon Road. The Zone between Hatfield Peverel and Witham follows Maldon Road, Wickham Bishops Road, and Hatfield Road/Maldon Road until following the Parish Council boundary north to the railway line, and following the railway line to the Hatfield Peverel settlement boundary.
54. The proposed Zone presented in figure 12 recognises the development pressures outlined within section 5 of this report, presents a proposed area which is clearly identifiable on maps and on the

ground, and seeks to focus the identified Zone on areas which would have the greatest impacts on the potential for the coalescence of the settlements to take place.

Figure 11: Proposed draft Coalescence Safeguarding Zone policy

Policy: Coalescence Safeguarding Zone

- A. The Policies Map identifies the Coalescence Safeguarding Zone. New development proposals within this area will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the development would not detrimentally impact the character of Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley as separate and distinguishable settlements, and will not result in the coalescence of Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley with surrounding settlements.
- B. New development within the Coalescence Safeguarding Zone will be subject to a comprehensive assessment of the impacts upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area. To enable this, all new development proposals within the Coalescence Safeguarding Zone must include a detailed assessment of:
 - i. the impacts of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, taking into account the design, size and scale of the proposed development;
 - ii. the potential for the development to result in the coalescence of settlements within the Parish and the surrounding area. The assessment should demonstrate how the development will maintain a clear separation and avoid any potential coalescence between settlements within the Parish and adjoining Parishes.
- C. Major new development proposals within the Coalescence Safeguarding Zone should include a visual impact assessment, clearly outlining the impact of development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and demonstrating the impact of the development and proposed mitigation measures on views from settlements within the Parish.

Figure 12: Map of proposed Coalescence Safeguarding Zone



6.1 Assessment of the proposed policy against the basic conditions

55. All policies within the NDP must meet the requirements of the neighbourhood plan basic conditions. Table 4 below therefore assesses the proposed draft Coalescence Safeguarding Zone policy against the requirements of the basic conditions.

Table 4: Assessment of the draft Coalescence Safeguarding Zone policy against the requirements of the neighbourhood plan basic conditions

Summary of Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Plan policy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support development which would not detrimentally impact the character of Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley and will not result in coalescence. • New development proposals within the CSZ must include an assessment of the impacts upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the potential for the development to result in the coalescence of settlements. • Major new development proposals within the CSZ should include a visual impact assessment. 	
Have regard to national planning policy	
Relevant section of national planning policy and guidance	How the Neighbourhood Plan policy has regard to national planning policy and guidance
NPPF 80	Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside
NPPF 112, 130 c)	Planning applications should respond to local character
NPPF 174 b)	Planning policies and decisions should recognise the character of the countryside
Relevant section of national planning policy and guidance	How has the Neighbourhood Plan policy <u>not</u> had regard to national planning policy and guidance
Topics within the policy which are not included within national planning policy and guidance	
National planning policy does not refer specifically to the coalescence of settlements and the need to produce a visual impact assessment to support development proposals.	
Conformity with local strategic planning policy	
Relevant local strategic planning policy	How the Neighbourhood Plan policy conforms with local strategic planning policy
CS5	Seeking to control development in the countryside
CS8	Ensuring that development proposals have regard to the character of the landscape and its sensitivity to change
SP 3	Future growth will be planned to ensure existing settlements maintain their distinctive character and role, and to avoid coalescence between them
SP 7	All new development should respond positively to local character
Relevant section of local planning policy and guidance	How does the Neighbourhood Plan policy <u>not</u> conform with local strategic planning policy
Topics within the policy which are not included within local strategic planning policy	
The Policy goes beyond local strategic policy by seek to protecting local landscape character, avoid and mitigate coalescence, and protect the intrinsic character and beauty of he countryside. These topics are address in BDLP non-strategic policies LPP1 and LPP72.	
Conclusions on having regard to national planning policy and guidance and conforming with local strategic policy	
While the Policy goes beyond the requirements of national and local planning policy, the Policy has regard to national planning policy and is in general conformity with local strategic planning policy.	
Contribution towards the achievement of sustainable development:	
Supporting the protection of the countryside, the character of existing settlements and seeking to achieve well-designed places.	

56. Table 4 demonstrates that the draft Coalescence Safeguarding Zone policy appropriately has regard to national planning policy and conforms with local strategic planning policy. Through this standalone assessment of the policy, it would appear that the policy contributes towards achieving sustainable development, would be unlikely to have a significant effects on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007) either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and would not appear to breach, and is therefore otherwise compatible with, EU obligations. The Policy would therefore meet all prescribed conditions for a neighbourhood plan policy outlined within the Neighbourhood Planning Regulation 2012 (as amended).

DRAFT

7. Conclusion

57. This report has considered in detail the reasons why the previous 'Green Wedge' policy was removed from the NDP at examination, and the need for a similar policy within the NDP update to address continued local concerns regarding the potential for the coalescence of settlements within the Parish. The assessment concluded that the combination of local plan site allocations, planning approvals, and the interest from landowners to develop land within the Parish, makes the potential for the coalescence of settlements within the Parish to be a sufficient risk to require the inclusion of a policy within the NDP which provides additional development management mechanisms within the areas at greatest risk from coalescence.
58. The review of case studies demonstrated that policies addressing concerns regarding the coalescence of settlements have been included within made neighbourhood plans in the surrounding area within Braintree District. The precedent for the inclusion of such a policy has therefore been set.
59. The proposed draft Coalescence Safeguarding Zone policy provides the NDP with a clear and unambiguous policy which meets the requirements of the neighbourhood plan basic conditions. The draft policy seeks to protect against the potential for the coalescence of settlements to take place in a clearly defined area where the potential risks of coalescence have been comprehensively established and justified with reference to the evidence through this report. It is therefore recommended that the NDP update includes the draft Coalescence Safeguarding Zone policy presented within this report.

Appendix 1: Braintree District Council proposed amendments to the submitted Local Plan

Local Plan Section 2 Examination document *SDBDC/008a(1/3) Further Suggested Changes to the Local Plan - May 2021*¹¹ proposes a series of amendments, numbered MP75-MP80, to the Hatfield Peverel settlement boundary:

Ref Number	Paragraph or Policy	Change	Reason
MP75	Inset Map 36 Hatfield Peverel	Remove comprehensive development area	To reflect updated planning permission
MP76	Inset Map 36 Hatfield Peverel	Residential allocation of Former Arla Dairy 16/02086/OUT – HATF608 and include within development boundary	To reflect updated planning permission
MP77	Inset Map 36 Hatfield Peverel	Residential allocation of Sorrells Field 17/00973/FUL – HATF313 and include within development boundary	To reflect updated planning permission
MP78	Inset Map 36 Hatfield Peverel	Residential allocation of Bury Farm 17/0034/OUT – HATF341 and include within development boundary	To reflect updated planning permission
MP79	Inset Map 36 Hatfield Peverel	Amend development boundary and add residential allocation of 10 or more Land north of Gleneagles Way 16/02156/OUT – HATF317 and include within development boundary	To reflect updated planning permission
MP80	Inset Map 36 Hatfield Peverel	Amend development boundary and add residential allocation of 10 or more Land South of Stonepath Drive 20/01906/REM – HATF314 and include within development boundary.	To reflect updated planning permission

¹¹ Further Suggested Changes to the Local Plan (May 2021), available at: www.braintree.gov.uk/downloads/file/3160/sdbdc008a-further-suggested-changes-to-the-local-plan-may-2021