

# Great Notley Country Park Masterplan Baseline Report

**Client**

Essex County Council and  
Braintree District Council

**Date:**

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Essex County Council



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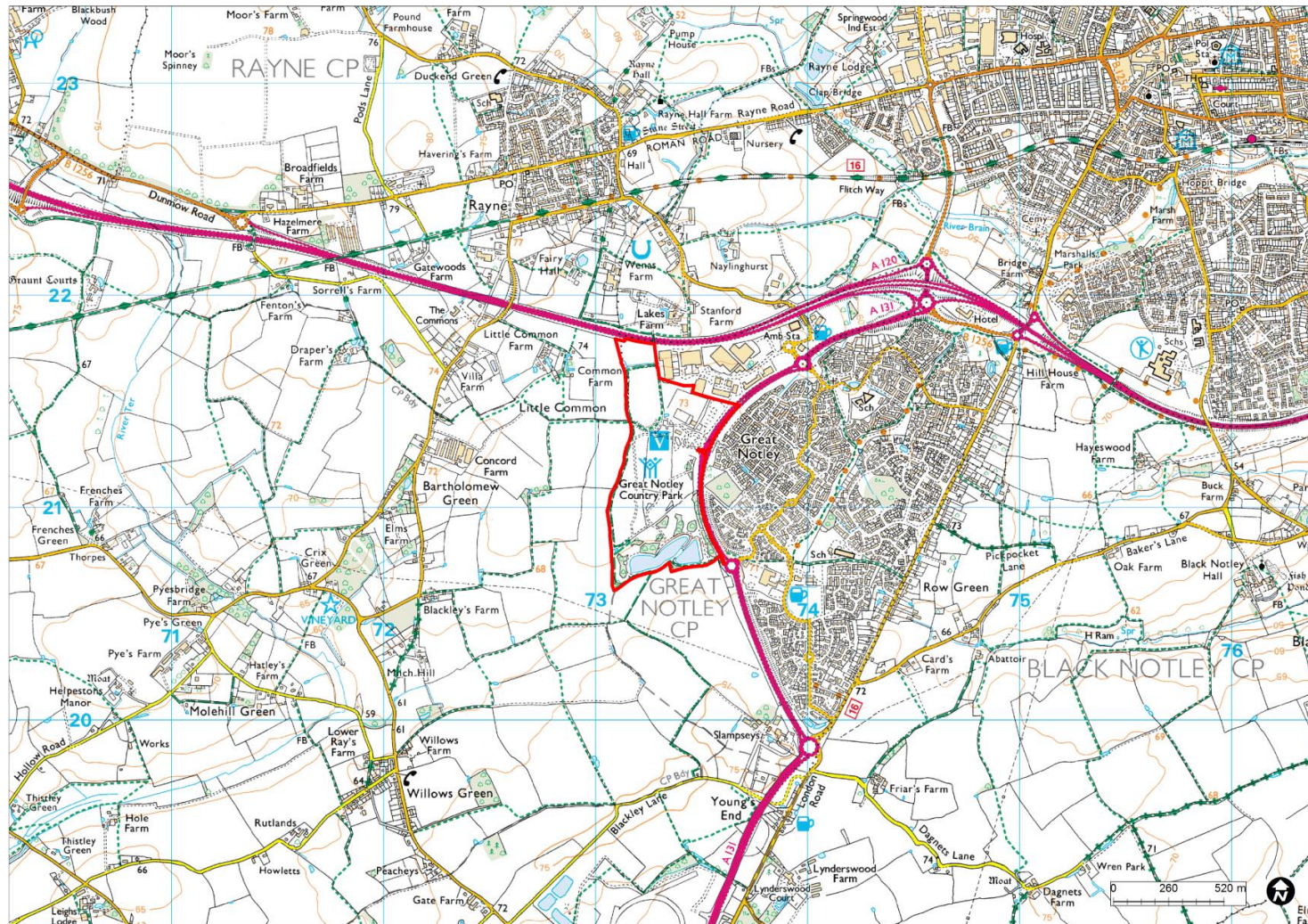


## 0. Introduction

- 0.1 Essex County Council (ECC) and Braintree District Council (BDC) instructed Place Services to produce this baseline report to inform the future master planning of Great Notley Country Park (GNCP). This assessment includes all land indicated on the map provided below in figure 1. This area is hereafter referred to as 'the site'.
- 0.2 Place Services are acting as consultants for this work; therefore the content of the baseline report should not be interpreted or otherwise represented as the formal view of ECC.
- 0.3 GNCP is situated in the north of Essex, in the parish of Great Notley, Braintree District. Braintree town centre is approximately 3km to the north-east. The park is bordered by the A120 to the north and the A131 to the east.
- 0.4 The central grid reference of the site is TL 73353 21241. A location plan and aerial plan are provided in figures 1 and 2, respectively.
- 0.5 The geographic scope of the baseline study will focus primarily upon GNCP, but contextual data will be collected beyond the boundary of the park with regard to environmental, land-use (competitor) and visitor (customer) information.
- 0.6 Emma Woods and Peter Dawson of Place Services facilitated a GNCP Strategic Review Workshop with participation from officers of both BDC and ECC on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015. The workshop aimed to provide a vision for the outcomes of the baseline report, master planning and future use of the GNCP site.
- 0.7 The aim of this baseline report is to provide a summary of the current conditions of GNCP with the view to informing a master planning exercise of the site in the near future. This baseline aims to provide information on the following topics to inform master planning:
- Physical Constraints
  - Stakeholder Analysis
  - Market Information
  - Operational Analysis
  - Finances



**Figure 1: Location map**



Source: Place Services 2017

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**Figure 2: Aerial Plan**



Source: Place Services 2017



# 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The site is constrained to the north, east and south and so any potential expansion would have to be to the west onto farmland into Uttlesford District. This land is within the Felsted Farmland Plateau area of the Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment which has low-to moderate sensitivity to change.
- 1.2 A number of protected species have been recorded on site, with multiple European protected species of bats and the national protected Eurasian badger. There is also the potential for water vole on site which is a European protected species.
- 1.3 With the current uses on site dominated by outdoor activity, the diversification of uses on site to include additional indoor activities and facilities could assist in attracting visitors throughout the traditionally low season. This would provide mutually beneficial impacts with Hatfield Forest which is experiencing deteriorating conditions within the forest due to over visitation in winter. Tourists could be deterred from visiting Hatfield Forest and be encouraged to attend GNCP as an alternative.
- 1.4 Owing to its status as a destination park, GNCP attracts visitors from significant distances and so tourists from all of the above administrative areas are likely to visit. The total additional dwellings to be planned for over the period of 2018-2036 between Braintree, Tendring, Colchester and Chelmsford is 53,838 which represents a substantial level of growth within the customer base of the site.
- 1.5 Public opinion states that overall there were enough parks, gardens and recreation grounds (59%) and areas for water recreation (59%) to meet local need. In contrast a majority of people thought that overall there were not enough footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths (58%); country parks, accessible countryside and woodlands (59%); wildlife areas and nature reserves (62%).
- 1.6 The typology of open space with the highest prevalence in Braintree is accessible natural green space, some 279.45ha more than the next most common typology of amenity green space. The type of open space with the least coverage in the district is fixed outdoor sports pitches of which there is just 1.06 ha. This also represents the lowest provision per 1000 population alongside play space for youths, both of which register 0.01ha per 1000. Allotments, outdoor sports pitches, outdoor sports private space, play space for children and churchyards and cemeteries all have less than 0.50ha per 1000 provision. Amenity green space, park and recreation ground (combined), park and recreation ground and education open spaces all have better provision within the district at higher than 0.50ha per 1000 population.
- 1.7 Deficits in children's play spaces are present across the majority of Uttlesford District, the largest of which are evident around the Saffron Walden and Stansted areas. Great Dunmow and Felsted are among the parishes in the closest proximity to GNCP and both register deficits of 5.0 and 3.7 ha respectively. Similarly to the children's play space assessment deficits are present in numerous parishes for outdoor sports space within the district. Again the largest deficits are evident in Saffron Walden and Stansted, but deficiencies are also present in the parishes in closer proximity of GNCP. Great Dunmow and Felsted are lacking 2.4 and 2.0 ha of outdoor sports space respectively.
- 1.8 Colchester's priorities for open space are maintaining the quality of football pitches (in particular) as the growth of football and demand for more play on pitches evolves, improving the quality of the pitches, particularly on primary school sites, to ensure improved access and resurfacing of the current two 3G football turf pitches.
- 1.9 Tendring has a number of priorities for increasing the provision of open space, including improvements to PRow networks, new accessible woodlands, additional outdoor football pitches and MUGAs and tennis courts. There are not strategic priorities regarding Country Park provision within the district.





- 1.10 Market information from the GNCP Survey indicates that the predominant age group visiting the site are aged between 35 and 44 years old (41% of visitors), likely with young families. This evidence identifies families as the vast majority of visitors to the park and so options for expanding the range of activities available should predominantly be focused with meeting the needs of families.
- 1.11 Currently the only provision for food and refreshments on the site is in a café located in the Discovery Centre. The centre is small and cannot provide for all visitors on the site as well as having limited seating available outside for the peak summer months. Given that data from the GNCP Survey puts 'having a picnic' as the third most popular activity for visitors to the park with 11% of visitors partaking, there is a market for the provision of competitively priced and convenient food and refreshment services.
- 1.12 East-west travel times by road between Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester are currently impacted by high levels of traffic congestion particularly on the A120 and A130. The A12 also experiences levels of driver delay particular around Chelmsford and south towards the M25. Public consultation is currently underway for the proposed new routes of the A120 strategic road.
- 1.13 Stresses on train lines are likely to impact on the GNCP due to the interchange at Witham reaching full capacity. Additional travel is required once arriving at Braintree station which would also deter some visitors from utilising this train line. Braintree, Freeport train station is approximately 3.5km from GNCP and Braintree town centre train station is approximately 3km away, both of which are further than people would reasonably be expected to walk meaning another form of public transport would be needed to visit the site. The nearest bus stop is outside Chatsworth House approximately 520m east of the site in Great Notley which is still a considerable distance to walk for the predominant customer group of families with children.
- 1.14 The National Express coach 250 stops at Braintree and consists of 11 services per day. Bus routes 362, 70, SX133, 132 and 803 all stop in Braintree. The route with the highest frequency of service is 132 from Halstead to Witham which is a local bus route. This does not support a wide range of people wanting to visit the park from the wider Essex context and beyond. The bus routes travelling further across Essex do not run as frequently as evidenced by routes 362, 70 and 803 which extend as far as Chelmsford, Colchester and Harwich respectively and feature just 2-3 services per day.
- 1.15 National Route 16 operates in Essex and the first section connects Route 13 near Stansted via Great Dunmow, Braintree and Witham and continues to the intersection of Route 1 near Great Totham. The second section will connect Basildon with Shoeburyness, near Southend-on-Sea. Route 16 starts at the intersection with Route 13 at Birchanger near Stansted. The route heads south-east on bridle paths from the village of Birchanger near Stansted to join the Flitch Way. A bridleway to the Flitch Way allows cycle and horse riding access to about 15 miles of safe traffic and connects to GNCP. The Flitch Way runs directly into the heart of Braintree and provides an alternative car-free route to the park.
- 1.16 GNCP is run in partnership between BDC and ECC and operational management of GNCP is undertaken by ECC staff, who are also responsible for the management of the Flitch Way and Blackwater Trail. There is the potential opportunity to link the teams for both GNCP and Flitch Way further to expand current operations, encourage sustainable transport to both sites and create a wider strategic network of open, publicly accessible spaces within Braintree District.
- 1.17 Total income for GNCP was £253,742.00 for the 2015/16 financial year. The operating costs for GNCP, Flitch Way and associated woodlands are in deficit of £34,266.00, providing evidence to support the aspiration for GNCP to become a self-supporting and financially viable entity to alleviate the strain on operating costs across the sites.
- 1.18 Current trends demonstrate that the AGP pitches create a significant annual profit for GNCP of £84,484.00 followed by the senior natural turf pitches generating £10,095.00 of profit per annum. The U7/U8 small natural turf pitches and





U15/U16 natural turf youth pitches both operate in a deficits, calculated at £1,500.00 and £1,050.00 respectively. Further financial considerations for the football pitches on site are the lifetime costs of the facilities. The overall lifetime cost for all of the pitches is £13,955,450.00.

- 1.19 Additional revenue is generated from car parking charges on the site. Data was collected from April 2016 to October 2016 and as anticipated, the highest income from car parking charges was in the month of August when visitor numbers peak. A total of 12,718 parking tickets were purchased in August, totalling £51,326.10 of income.
- 1.20 The West of Braintree site is an identified option within the Strategic Part 1 for the Local Plans of Braintree, Colchester and Tendring Councils. Its allocation in a strategic plan, and the likelihood that it will come forward later in the aforementioned plan periods, means that commitments as to the site boundary have not yet been made. It should be noted that further detail on the specific scheme will be the focus of a forthcoming masterplan. This development has the potential to significantly impact on GNCP as there will be a requirement to provide open spaces akin to Country Parks.

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## 2. Context

- 2.1 The current partnership between BDC and ECC for the management and operation of GNCP was established in 2008. Over the past 9 years GNCP has transformed into an important visitor attraction within the Braintree District. It is estimated that there have been over 1,000,000 visitors to the country park since 2008.
- 2.2 The site has seen investments in play equipment, the visitor centre, car parking, an artificial grass pitch (AGP) and multi-use games area (MUGA), other grass pitches, the sky ropes, organised events and the overall maintenance of the park itself.
- 2.3 The park has seen significant increases in popularity amongst local residents and visitors from further afield who use the park for both formal and informal leisure and recreation activities.
- 2.4 The park has a number of important roles:
- Meeting objectives regarding:
    - health and well-being;
    - giving children the best start in life; and
    - providing a high quality environment.
  - The park's identity as a flagship country park.
- 2.5 BDC's emerging Local Plan identifies a housing need of 14,365 new homes to be delivered between 2016 and 2033. As a result of this level of growth, GNCP will face increased opportunities to welcome new users.
- 2.6 It is therefore considered an appropriate time to review the long term strategic aspirations and vision for the park for the next 10-15 years given the significant increase in the population of Braintree District over the next 15 years.

### Historical information (Taken from the GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020)

- 2.7 The designation of GNCP as a 'country park' is a product of the Countryside Act (1968). The purpose of country parks was to create areas of public open space that provided a natural, rural atmosphere for visitors without the requirement to go out into the wider countryside. GNCP was created over two decades after most country parks were originally designated but still fits into this ethos.
- 2.8 The park has been visited by ECC Field Archaeology Unit (FAU) to record the archaeological history of the park. Prehistoric flints have been found on site as well as small amounts of pottery from Roman and Medieval periods.
- 2.9 In general, BDC maintained the open spaces with regular grass cutting. Grass cutting was concentrated around the Discovery Centre, with less frequent cuts on the mounds further away from the centre. The new plantations are maturing and some of the protective fencing and guards have been removed.
- 2.10 The Park has acted as a receptor site for slow worm *Anguis fragilis* and common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*. Reptile hibernacula have been built into some of the mounds to improve the habitat. Pitch Pond and Wild Service Tree Pond were dredged in late 2007. Some tree work has also been undertaken to increase the light reaching the surface of these ponds. The surfaced path network was increased in 2008 to improve access to the concurrently installed play trail. This has provided an alternative smaller loop within the park for visitors to walk around.
- 2.11 In the past, a number of activities involving education have been present on the site. Under the management of BDC an outdoor education programme was set up in 2002. A small number of school visits took place at the Discovery Centre predominately catering for primary school children and involving a variety of activities from nature trails and science experiments to education packs on the sustainability aspects of the Discovery Centre. This programme



stopped running due to a change in staff and lack of interest from schools. Up to 2007, workshops were held by a number of different organisations, such as Essex Ambulance and Fire Services, ECC, and Victim Support, however site organisers have since moved these events to a different venue.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020

### **Current uses on the site (Taken from the GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020)**

- 2.12 In 2008 ECC provided capital funding to install an adventure play trail in the park. This was installed in spring of that year. The play trail is an extensive series of different pieces of play equipment over a trail of about 1.2km in length. Designed by Richter Spielgerate with the ethos of allowing children to feel challenged and learn to make their own decisions about risks it also fosters a spirit of co-operation with some pieces working best when used by two or more people. There is a mixture of set designs and bespoke climbing frames for visitors to discover and it is not uncommon for families to spend an entire day playing. Play equipment of this nature and on this scale is currently rare in the East of England and has drawn in visitors from across the county and beyond.
- 2.13 Following on from the discussion of previous educational uses on the site in the historical information section of this report, the site is currently used for some schooling purposes. Since the handover of site management to ECC Country Parks in 2008 school visits have been coordinated by the Country Parks Education Team in conjunction with the GNCP and Flitch Way Ranger Team. The Education Team offer a uniform set of lesson plans across all the country parks and also design specific lessons that utilise the special features of individual parks. A mixture of park rangers and education rangers from the Education Team lead the school visits around the Park.
- 2.14 The number of school visits increased in 2008 and the park welcomed 577 school pupils over the year. In 2009 numbers increased again to 1158 pupils. Currently, the visits are centred on the spring and summer terms when the weather is more favourable for outdoor activities. Most classes that visit are Foundation-Year 6. Science subjects requested included animals and their differing habitats, pond dipping, mini-beast hunts, the growth of plants, seed dispersal, and the parts of plants.
- 2.15 The orienteering trail and play trail are also popular draws for school groups and a new permanent orienteering course was installed on site in April 2009 thanks to support from Essex Stragglers Orienteering Society and an 'Awards for All' grant. As part of the grant, special maps for the orienteering trail are available free of charge from the Discovery Centre office. These have been used by schools, brownie and cub groups, orienteering clubs and members of the public. Other common activities requested by school groups are scavenger hunts, parachute games, quizzes, drama activities and, for younger children, the 'Teddies in their Dens' activity.
- 2.16 The site is also a popular venue for inter-school cross country competitions. Organised and run by the teachers of the schools involved these can have 700+ competitors spread across several age groups.
- 2.17 Schools visit the park mainly by coach and a designated coach parking bay has been created in the car park close to the visitor centre. Some schools, such as the White Court Primary School, can walk to the site from Great Notley Garden Village via the underpass.
- 2.18 Work experience placements are encouraged as a constructive way to engage with an age group that might otherwise not be interested in country parks. Similarly, volunteer work and college placements are seen a positive way of educating people about the park and gives a platform for exchanging views and work practices. In September 2008 Sport Essex, with funding from BAA Stansted, held a large event for under achieving secondary age pupils. The activities gave the pupils a chance to build confidence and challenge themselves in ways that they would not normally be able to in a school environment. The day was considered a huge success and may become an annual event.





- 2.19 The park rangers have hosted a visit from Writtle College students in 2008 and 2009 looking at the land management methods and conflicts within the park as part of a larger course.
- 2.20 Informal recreation within the park takes place throughout the year with the site being popular among local dog walkers. A greyhound dog walking club also meet once a month for a social walk around the park. Other popular activities include walking, running, cycling, watching wildlife, photography, flying kites, horse riding, fishing, picnicking and playing games in the open fields.
- 2.21 The site staff offer a range of themed birthday parties such as Pirates & Princesses or Fairies & Wizards or more traditional nature led mini-beast hunting and pond dipping to suit all ages from 2-10. The rangers are not now responsible for organising events at GNCP, as they are involved with the Halloween event, Spooky Fun, at Cressing Temple and also the Christmas event at Cressing Temple. They continue to conduct birthday parties and oversee third party events, such as cross country races and duathalons.
- 2.22 In past years BDC has run firework displays and music concerts taking advantage of the amphitheatre nature of the Bowl. These have attracted crowds of 1000 to 3000 people.
- 2.23 The park has also been used as a venue for external groups to run medium to large scale events, often with health and/or charitable benefits. Examples include district cross-country running meetings, Race for Life, Farleigh Hospice charity walks and Essex Bridleway Association rides.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020

- 2.24 The children's charity Play and Resource Centre (PARC; Essex) is located on the site, which is a short break centre for children and young adults with disabilities and additional needs. PARC (Essex) is not an educational facility, but instead ensures that all children have the right to play in a safe and secure environment that can cater to their individual needs and abilities.
- 2.25 The PARC (Essex) centre is a purpose built building for children with additional needs and provides a range of facilities to parents, children and families including an outdoor play area, main hall, soft play and ball pit area, sensory room, interactive and projector room and kitchen area. The centre also has a designated parking area for families and staff, and the centre and play equipment is completely wheelchair accessible. PARC (Essex) has disabled changing and toilet facilities which include an electronic changing bed and hoist and is open 7 days a week, providing play sessions and family support from birth up until the youth club age which is 25.

Source: Play and Resource Centre (PARC; Essex) <http://www.parc-essex.co.uk/>

## National objectives

- 2.26 National Planning Policies are detailed in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17.
- 2.27 Open spaces, sport and recreation all underpin people's quality of life. Well-designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are therefore fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives. These include:
- Supporting an urban renaissance: local networks of high quality and well managed and maintained open spaces, sports and recreational facilities help create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe. Green spaces in urban areas perform vital functions as areas for nature conservation and biodiversity and by acting as 'green lungs' can assist in meeting objectives to improve air quality.



- Supporting a rural renewal: the countryside can provide opportunities for recreation and visitors can play an important role in the regeneration of the economies of rural areas. Open spaces within rural settlements and accessibility to local sports and recreational facilities contribute to the quality of life and wellbeing of people who live in rural areas.
- Promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion: well-planned and maintained open spaces and good quality sports and recreational facilities can play a major part in improving people's sense of wellbeing in the place they live. As a focal point for community activities, they can bring together members of deprived communities and provide opportunities for people for social interaction.
- Health and wellbeing: open spaces, sports and recreational facilities have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness, and in the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activities and interaction with others.
- Promoting more sustainable development: by ensuring that open space, sports and recreational facilities (particularly in urban areas) are easily accessible by walking and cycling and that more heavily used or intensive sports and recreational facilities are planned for locations well served by public transport.

Source: Planning Practice Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation

- To ensure effective planning for open space, sport and recreation it is essential that the needs of local communities are known. Local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. Assessments will normally be undertaken at district level, although assessments of strategic facilities should be undertaken at regional or sub-regional levels.
- As a minimum, assessments of need should cover the differing and distinctive needs of the population for open space and built sports and recreational facilities. The needs of those working in and visiting areas, as well as residents should also be included.
- Local authorities should also undertake audits of existing open space, sports and recreational facilities, the use made of existing facilities, access in terms of location and costs (such as charges) and opportunities for new open space and facilities. Audits should consider both the quantitative and the qualitative elements of open space, sports and recreational facilities. Audits of quality will be particularly important as they will allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and maintenance.
- Assessments and audits will allow local authorities to identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in their areas. They form the starting point for establishing an effective strategy for open space, sport and recreation at the local level (tied into the local authority's Community Strategy), and for effective planning through the development of appropriate policies in plans.
- Good quality assessments and audits, leading to clear strategies supported by effective planning policies, will provide vital tools for resolving the potential conflicts that arise between different uses and users of open space, sports and recreational facilities. The Government expects all local authorities to carry out assessments of needs and audits of open space and sports and recreational facilities in accordance with the paragraphs above. Good practice guidance provides more detailed advice on how to undertake these assessments and audits.

Source: Planning Practice Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation



## 3. Physical Constraints

### Scale and landholding

- 3.1 This is not a legal document. Please refer to the original tenure documents before taking any decision or action which may have legal implications.
- 3.2 **Ownership:** GNCP is entirely owned by BDC.
- 3.3 **Type of Holding:** Freehold
- 3.4 **Acquisition details:** GNCP was handed over from Countryside Properties PLC in stages beginning on 02/Aug/2000 and ending on 04/Feb/2008 as part of the planning agreement for Great Notley Garden Village.
- 3.5 **Footpaths:** Three footpaths run across the site as marked on the definitive map for Essex in the figure below. Footpath 26 runs along the southern border of the park east from Bridleway 27 out over the A131 and through Great Notley Garden Village. Footpath 130 runs from the western side of the park near the Bowl east across the inside of the Bowl and then north out over the A120 towards Queensborough Lane. This footpath connects with Footpath 38, Footpath 146, Footpath 147, and Bridleway 27. Footpath 146 runs along the northern border of the park parallel with the A120. This footpath connects with Footpath 20, Footpath 130, and Bridleway 27. Footpath 147 runs from the park boundary east into the Skyline Industrial Estate. Footpath 38 runs from the park boundary west towards School Road.
- 3.6 **Bridleways:** One bridleway runs across the park as marked on the definitive map for Essex in the figure below. Bridleway 27 runs along the western border of the park south from the A120 crossing out towards Blackley Lane, Youngs End. This bridleway connects with Footpath 26, Footpath 38, Footpath 130, Footpath 146, and Footpath 147.
- 3.7 **Common Rights:** There are no common rights for any part of GNCP.
- 3.8 **Byelaws:** There are currently no byelaws covering GNCP.
- 3.9 **Access:** Vehicular access to the park is available at two points along the A131 both of which are gated and are capable of being locked to the general public. These gates allow access to the southern and the northern sections of the park. The internal bridges of the park are not strong enough to take heavy vehicles and so the southern gate must be used for heavy vehicles that need access to Wildflower Meadows and Woodland, The Lakes and A131 Shelterbelt. Vehicular access is also possible via Fairy Hall Lane and Bridleway 27, although there is no definitive permission. As the southern access point is reserved for heavy vehicles, all that remains is a single access point for visitor vehicles to the site from the A131.
- 3.10 **Car Parking:** There are 180 hard standing car parking spaces and an overflow car park. The perception is that the use of the overflow car park is damaging to the experience of the visitors and is only a viable parking location in dry weather. The overflow car park is located on a grass surface and so becomes unreliable in wet weather. Before opening the overflow car park the ground condition of the area to be used must be assessed to check that it will not be excessively damaged by vehicles.

Source: GNCP Strategic Workshop and GNCP Management Plan 2015 – 2020





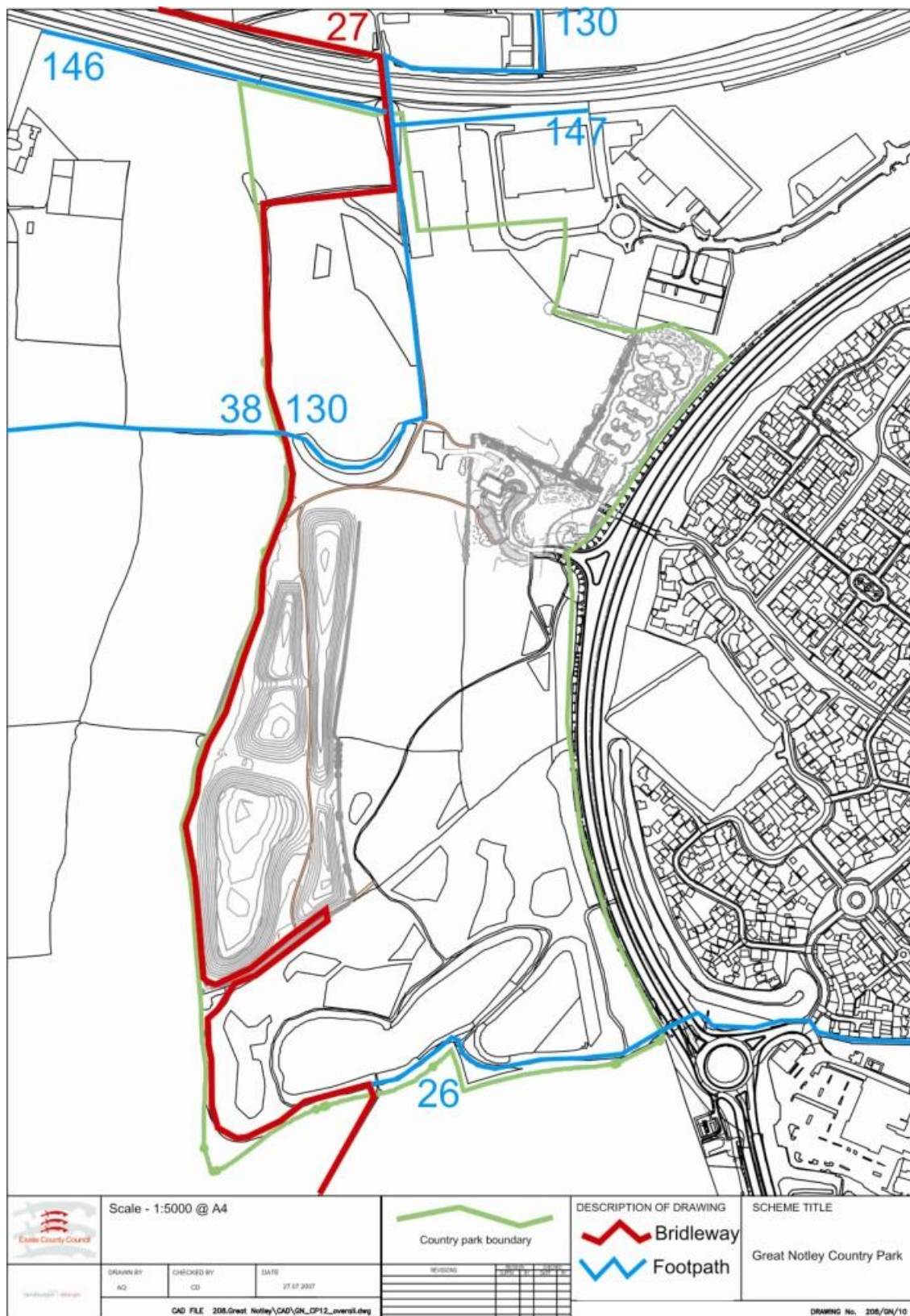
3.11 GNCP is in close proximity to Braintree Town, which is accessible from a variety of larger settlements. As a destination park, GNCP attracts visitors from further distances and the table below demonstrates the distances between Braintree and major towns and cities, forming the majority of the visitor base for the site.

**Table 1: Travel times to GNCP**

| Destination of origin | Travel time             |  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|
|                       | Private vehicle         | Public transport (either bus or train) |
| Cambridge             | 1hr 35mins              | 1hr - 1hr 25mins                       |
| Chelmsford            | 25mins                  | 30 - 40mins                            |
| Marks Tey             | 25 - 30mins             | 40mins                                 |
| Colchester            | 40 - 50mins             | 47mins                                 |
| London                | 1hr 40mins - 2hr 30mins | 1hr 5mins                              |

Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)

**Figure 3: Map of GNCP with access routes**



Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020



## Environmental constraints

### Wildlife surveys

#### Flora

**Table 2: Notable flora in GNCP**

| Level of importance | Species name  |
|---------------------|---|
| Priority species    | Black poplar ( <i>Populus nigra</i> subsp <i>betulifolia</i> )  |
| Notable species     | Wild service tree ( <i>Sorbus torminalis</i> ), crab apple ( <i>Malus spp.</i> ) and spindle ( <i>Euonymus europaeus</i> )  |
| Invasive species    | Himalayan balsam ( <i>Impatiens glandulifera</i> ) and Australian stone-crop ( <i>Crassula helmsii</i> )  |
| Injurious weeds     | Common ragwort ( <i>Senecio jacobaea</i> ), creeping thistle ( <i>Cirsium arvense</i> ), spear thistle ( <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> ), broad-leaved dock ( <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i> ) and curled dock ( <i>Rumex crispus</i> ) |

- 3.12 **Priority species:** black poplar (*Populus nigra* subsp *betulifolia*). As a BAP species targeted by BDC, three whips of Black poplar were planted around the main lake in the winter of 2007/08. Due to their size and position in the park they have been prone to vandalism and damage.
- 3.13 **Notable species:** wild service tree (*Sorbus torminalis*), crab apple (*Malus spp.*) and spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) were discovered in the hedgerows during the Essex Ecology Services (EECOS) baseline survey and are probably of natural origin due to their previous remoteness from habitation.
- 3.14 **Invasive species:** Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) can be found inhabiting the banks of ditches in patches around the park. As most of the ditches are dry in the summer/autumn period its spread around the park has so far been limited. Australian stone-crop (*Crassula helmsii*) is present in at least one pond (PARC Pond). This pond is shaded by mature trees and hedgerow and dries out in summer. This may have limited the spread of *Crassula* to other parts of the park. It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981; as amended) to allow either of these species to spread to the wild.
- 3.15 **Injurious weeds:** common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*) and curled dock (*Rumex crispus*) are present on site mainly in the compartments with rough grassland. Common ragwort and creeping thistle show the greatest abundance. The thistle has formed dense clumps in the Wildflower Meadows and Woodland and Play Trail. In contrast, ragwort is more evenly and openly spread around the park.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020



## Mammals

| Level of importance | Species name  |
|---------------------|---|
| Protected species   | <p><b>European protected species</b><br/>Bats: common pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>), soprano pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>), Daubenton's (<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>), Natterer's (<i>Myotis nattereri</i>), brown long-eared (<i>Plecotis auritus</i>) and noctule (<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>).</p> <p>Potential for water vole (<i>Arvicola terrestris</i>).</p> <p><b>Nationally protected species</b><br/>Eurasian badger (<i>Meles meles</i>).</p> |
| Priority species    | Potential for brown hare ( <i>Lepus europaeus</i> )   |
| Notable species     | Common shrew ( <i>Sorex araneus</i> ), bank vole ( <i>Clethrionomys glareolus</i> ) and wood mouse ( <i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i> ).  |
| Pests               | Rabbits ( <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i> ), roe deer ( <i>Capreolus capreolus</i> ), fallow deer ( <i>Dama dama</i> ) and muntjac ( <i>Muntiacus reevesi</i> ).   |
| Invasive species    | Muntjac deer ( <i>Muntiacus reevesi</i> ), mink ( <i>Mustela vison</i> ) and grey squirrel ( <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i> ).   |

- 3.16 **Protected Species:** There are currently no survey records of bats kept on file by the Country Park but members of Essex Bat Group have visited the park over a number of years to listen to the bats flying in the evening. Species heard include common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*), Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*), brown long-eared (*Plecotis auritus*) and noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*). The bats that are able to utilise buildings as roost sites are likely to be flying from Great Notley Garden Village to the park to feed.
- 3.17 Water voles (*Arvicola terrestris*) have not been recorded in the park but may be present seasonally, in low numbers and/or are living in parts of the park that are harder to survey. Appropriate habitat for this species is available in the park. It may be necessary to undertake specific surveys for this species in the future order to ascertain whether or not it is present.
- 3.18 A small sett populated by a family of Eurasian badger (*Meles meles*) exists to the North of the country park. An artificial outlying sett was built at the north end of what is now the main car park for the country park during the building of the Skyline industrial estate in order to mitigate the disturbance that the building work created. This was used seasonally until 2007. No activity was seen in 2008. A second outlying sett was built by BDC with the local MENCAP group in the South of the park. There is no evidence that this has been used by badgers.
- 3.19 **Priority species:** brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) have not been recorded in the park but may be present seasonally, in low numbers and/or are living in parts of the park that are harder to survey. Appropriate habitat for this species is available in the park. It may be necessary to undertake specific surveys for this species in the future order to ascertain whether or not it is present.
- 3.20 **Notable species:** The rough grassland in the park supports a healthy population of small mammals such as common shrew (*Sorex araneus*), bank vole (*Clethrionomys glareolus*) and wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*). These, in turn, provide a food source throughout the year for birds of prey such as kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), which can often be seen hovering over the park.



- 3.21 **Pests:** Rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) are abundant in the park living in burrows along the hedgerows and ditches. As visitor numbers have increased during the daytime rabbit activity has shifted to evening and night grazing. Rabbit grazing is of particular concern to the neighbouring arable farmers. Night-time shooting is used on site to try to control rabbit numbers.
- 3.22 Roe (*Capreolus capreolus*), fallow (*Dama dama*) and muntjac deer (*Muntiacus reevesi*) are known to be in the area around GNCP, but browsing damage to trees in the park is negligible. No sightings of deer were made by park staff in 2008. This may be due to the number of visitors and particularly the number of dog walkers that use the park.
- 3.23 **Invasive species:** Muntjac deer, mink and grey squirrel are listed as invasive species in the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981; as amended). It is an offense to release these species into the wild. Grey squirrel is present in low numbers on site. The population is expected to increase as the trees on site mature. There is no evidence of squirrels stripping bark or damaging the trees growing in the park at the moment, and they are widespread and common across Essex and the majority of the country. Although not recorded within the park, the park could provide suitable habitat, as part of a larger range, for both other species. Future surveys of the park may wish to target these species to determine whether or not they are present.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020

## Birds

| Level of importance | Species name  |
|---------------------|---|
| Priority species    | Skylark ( <i>Alauda arvensis</i> ) and Song Thrush ( <i>Turdus philomelos</i> )   |
| Notable species     | Reed Warbler ( <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i> ), Reed Bunting ( <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i> ), Water Rail ( <i>Rallus aquaticus</i> ), Snipe ( <i>Gallinago gallinago</i> ), Pied Wagtail ( <i>Motacilla alba</i> ), Whitethroat ( <i>Sylvia communis</i> ), Willow Warbler ( <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> ), Stone Chat ( <i>Saxicola torquata</i> ), Redwings ( <i>Turdus iliacus</i> ), Fieldfares ( <i>Turdus pilaris</i> ), Gold Finches ( <i>Carduelis carduelis</i> ), Yellowhammer ( <i>Emberiza citrinella</i> ) and Little Owl ( <i>Athene noctua</i> ). |

- 3.24 **Priority species:** The Park has populations of Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) and Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) throughout the year. The Skylark are known to breed in the park, nesting in the long grass on the mounds. Surveys to ascertain the population levels of these species have not been made so, at this stage, it is difficult to say with any scientific certainty if numbers are increasing, remaining constant or in decline on the park.
- 3.25 **Notable species:** A full survey of the birds on the park has not been carried out since the EECOS survey of 2001. Some notable species have been seen and heard around the lakes. Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*) is thought to be breeding in the reed beds. Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) has been seen around the lakes and mixing with winter finch flocks. Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) has been heard and seen in the reedbeds. Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) has been seen using the small ponds in front of the Discovery Centre overwinter. The popular Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) roost in the reed beds on site and are often seen outside the Discovery Centre.
- 3.26 There are also species that are more commonly associated with the field and hedgerow structure in the park such as Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*) and Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) in the summer and Stone Chat (*Saxicola torquata*), Redwings (*Turdus iliacus*), Fieldfares (*Turdus pilaris*) in the winter. Winter mixed finch flocks, especially of Gold Finches (*Carduelis carduelis*), reach good numbers often reaching 100+ birds in a flock. Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*) are seen throughout the year but it is unknown if they currently breed on the site. Two breeding pairs of Little Owl (*Athene noctua*) are thought to inhabit the park and owl boxes have previously been installed in large hedgerow trees.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020





## Reptiles and Amphibians

| Level of importance | Species name   |
|---------------------|--|
| Protected species   | Great Crested Newts ( <i>Triturus cristatus</i> ), Slow Worm ( <i>Anguis fragilis</i> ) and Viviparous Lizard ( <i>Lacerta vivipara</i> ). |
| Notable species     | Smooth Newt ( <i>Triturus vulgaris</i> ), Common Toad ( <i>Bufo bufo</i> ) and Common Frog ( <i>Rana temporaria</i> ).                     |

- 3.27 **Protected species:** Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are known to use at least two ponds in the park. Breeding season torch surveys have shown adult presence in Centre Pond and Wild Service Tree Pond. Evidence of other stages of life is yet to be found in the park but may be found during future survey work. It is likely that Great Crested Newt activity is not limited to these two ponds. The pond and ditch system provide a good network to support a meta-population of Great Crested Newt.
- 3.28 Slow Worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and Viviparous Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*) have been introduced to the park as part of two translocation schemes. In 2005 both species were introduced to the mounds in the Play Trail and suitable hibernacula were constructed on the North facing slopes. In 2007 a second translocation scheme began which is ongoing. Reptiles were again released into the Play Trail and then in 2008 into The Bowl and Wildlife Area. Surveys before introduction indicated that these species were not present before the translocations took place. Although the evidence for translocation success is ambivalent, if these species get a foothold in the park, it is likely that they will spread to other compartments with suitable habitat.
- 3.29 **Notable species:** The Park also contains healthy populations of Smooth Newt (*Triturus vulgaris*), Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*) and Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*). These utilise the spectrum of waterbody types in the park. Amphibian activity is most noticeable in the spring breeding season and these species have been recorded during Great Crested Newt surveys.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020

## Invertebrates

| Level of importance | Species name   |
|---------------------|--|
| Priority species    | Unlikely to be present, but possibility of Stag Beetle ( <i>Lucanus cervus</i> ).              |
| Notable species     | Halactid Bee ( <i>Lasioglossum malachurus</i> ) and Hoverfly ( <i>Cheilosia bergenstammi</i> ) |

- 3.30 **Priority species:** No Priority invertebrates are known to be present in the park. Considering previous land use, it is perhaps unlikely that any are present – the most likely being the Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus*).

- 3.31 **Notable species:** In 2008 the site is known to have supported at least two colonies of wild Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*) with a third in the neighbouring area. Unfortunately, these colonies appear to have collapsed in 2009.

A halactid bee (*Lasioglossum malachurus*) was found during the EECOS baseline survey of 2000. This species is nationally notable but is widespread in Essex. It feeds on pollen and nectar from willow and dandelions.

A hoverfly (*Cheilosia bergenstammi*) was found during the EECOS baseline survey of 2000. Considered uncommon in Essex its presence is probably due to the availability of its larval food-plant of Common ragwort.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020



## Priority Habitats

- 3.32 **Ancient/species-rich hedgerows:** The Park inherited several species-rich hedgerows from the preceding arable land use which are associated with the drainage ditches of the site. Although gaps are apparent in some parts, the hedgerows tend to be connected to each other and form a network connected to the remaining arable land to the West. Any connections to hedgerows to the East of the A131 are no longer in existence. Most of the hedge species are not yet of a size to prohibit the maintenance of the hedgerow. Several of the standard trees have been worked as pollards. These hedgerows should be assessed to see if they fulfil the requirements of The Hedgerow Regulations (1997) if removal of all or part of them is planned.
- 3.33 **Veteran trees:** Most of the trees present in the park are the result of recent planting. However, some of the hedgerow trees could be considered to be reaching veteran status and are exhibiting features such as stag's heads and hollowing of trunks. The existence of associated rare invertebrate life has not yet been ascertained but casual observations have shown that these trees provide suitable habitat for better known fauna such as honey bees and little owls.
- 3.34 **Lowland grassland:** The conversion of previously arable fields into parkland has provided the opportunity to create a herb-rich lowland grassland. The choice of seed mix originally sown introduced several locally exotic species to the site. The grassland can still be considered to be in its infancy and there is plenty of opportunity to adjust the management and attempt to create a suitable lowland grassland mix.

## Notable Habitats

- 3.35 **Lakes:** The lakes were dug early on in the creation of the park and represent habitat that was previously absent from the local area. Stocked with fish, they are likely to be of limited interest to amphibians but have encouraged birds on to the site that were previously absent. The presence of Common reed (*Phragmites australis*) in particular provides a small but important attraction to birds.
- 3.36 **Ponds:** All of the ponds in the park, with the exception of the two water treatment ponds in front of the Discovery Centre, were in existence on the original farmland. As such they are associated with the ditch network which acts as the main water source. The ponds are at their fullest in late winter/early spring and gradually drop in level over the summer. Seasonal water fluctuations in ponds are perfectly natural and if allowed to dry up occasionally will benefit amphibians by inhibiting colonization by fish. In most of the ponds, aquatic flora is currently limited by shading from surrounding hedgerows and trees. The two ponds dredged in 2007 are still to complete a process of re-colonisation by aquatic flora.
- 3.37 **Amenity Grassland:** The amenity grassland in the park is maintained for the benefit of the general public but still provides some wildlife interest. The abundance of White clover (*Trifolium repens*) throughout the summer provides a substantial nectar source for invertebrates. In the winter the open fields are exploited by loose flocks of Redwings (*Turdus iliacus*), Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) and Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*) foraging.
- 3.38 **Mixed Broadleaf Plantations:** The mixed broadleaf plantations were predominantly planted in the 1990s and are currently growing out of the thicket stage with some species beginning to dominate. In particular, the poplars (*Populus* spp.) are growing into a feature of the skyline. The more shade-tolerant species continue to grow in the understory whilst other trees slow to establish are being shaded out. Crown-lifting and thinning has taken place in some of the copses although not uniformly. The transformation to mature woodland will change the suitability of the habitat for some species with a likely decrease in the bird species that prefer scrub and thicket. A stable woodland ground flora is yet to establish under the new plantations.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020

## Designations

- 3.39 Before being created, GNCP was arable farmland without any conservation status and has not been granted a designation since. There are a number of local designations proximate to the site. White Court Wood, commonly referred to as Cuckoo Wood, is the nearest Local Wildlife Site (LoWS) to the park. This wood is a short walk from GNCP through the underpass and into Great Notley Garden Village. The Flitch Way, accessible from GNCP via Bridleway 27, is also a LoWS.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020

## Other environmental constraints

- 3.40 Hydrology on site is complicated due to the creation of new landscape features using the spoil from the building of the Great Notley Garden Village. This coupled with the A131 along the eastern boundary of the site created difficulties with run off, as the site collects water from the A131 and from the southern section of the Great Notley Garden Village. Mounds on site can funnel water to areas of the park which have limited drainage creating areas of shallow standing water.
- 3.41 The geology of the site consists of a non-porous clay cap over porous chalk. The impermeable nature of the clay prevents surface water from penetrating through to the chalk aquifer. There are no bore holes or wells in the park that reach down to the chalk aquifer and no springs located in the park. Soils are lime-rich loam and clay with impeded drainage as existed with the previous use of the site as arable farmland. Waterlogging occurs in the winter on flatter parts of the site.
- 3.42 On the whole, the park is relatively hidden within the flat landscape of Essex. However, the sculpture 'The Bird of Freedom' has become a landmark recognised by many of the commuters along the A120.
- 3.43 In order to dispose of the spoil from constructing the Great Notley Garden Village, significant landscaping measures were implemented on the GNCP site. Two lakes were dug with an approximately uniform depth of 1.3m as well as eight minor mounds constructed to provide height variation. These vary in area but are all approximately 5m in height. The most significant feature built on the site was the Great Notley Bowl which reaches approximately 20m above the original level at its highest point (90m above sea level). 3 fields were left untouched to be retained as amenity grassland, haymeadow and rough grassland and copses.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020

**Table 3: Summary of climate statistics**

| Summary of climate statistics for the Great Notley area |                |             |
|---|----------------|-------------|
| Mean temperature (°C)                                   | Annual average | 10.0 – 11.2 |
|   | Summer average | 16.2 – 17.6 |
|   | Winter average | 4.2 – 4.6   |
| Air frost (days/year)                                   |                | 45 – 50     |
| Ground frost (days/year)                                |                | 105 – 125   |
| Rainfall (mm)   | Annual average | 560 – 600   |
|   | Spring average | 125 – 130   |
|   | Summer average | 140 – 150   |



|                             |                |               |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------|
|                             | Autumn average | 160 – 170     |
|                             | Winter average | 130 – 150     |
| Rainfall >= 1mm (days/year) |                | 102 – 110     |
| Sunshine duration (hours)   | Annual average | 1,500 – 1,540 |
|                             | Spring average | 440 – 460     |
|                             | Summer average | 580 – 610     |
|                             | Autumn average | 325 – 335     |
|                             | Winter average | 170 – 180     |

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020 (taken from Met Office)

3.44 As a generalisation, the rainfall is fairly even throughout the year but the lower rate of evapotranspiration and ground frosts in the winter lead to more waterlogging and standing water on site. It is currently cold enough in winter to create a dormant season with little grass and herb growth. The average wind speed for the site is 5.1m/s at 10m above ground level (BERR website). As there is little in the form of a windbreak between the park and the prevailing south-easterly winds across open farmland, the site is relatively exposed to the wind.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020 (taken from Met Office)





## GNCP Strategic Review Workshop

- 3.45 Space and capacity of the site were raised in the workshop as an issue currently constraining the site. The site is 100 acres in size (approx. 45 hectares) and can accommodate circa 150,000 visitors per annum or approximately 2,000 per day which, as discussed above, can be reached in the peak months. With this in mind, the notion to explore expansion potential into neighbouring authorities was mentioned.
- 3.46 At the workshop the opportunity to work with Uttlesford District Council, who are also currently preparing their Local Plan, was raised. Uttlesford residents have limited access to natural green space, and therefore there could be opportunities to expend GNCP at the Uttlesford boundary. Moreover, if the Country Park expands into Uttlesford, opportunities to gather developer contributions (section 106 and community infrastructure levy (CIL)) from new development within Uttlesford could also be explored.
- 3.47 Existing facilities on the site were identified as a physical constraint to both visitors and potential development options. The discovery centre is not large enough to accommodate all visitors in peak months who wish to experience the facility. Furthermore, its frontage is poorly located facing away from the majority of the site and fronting onto the football pitches to the north. The football pitches located on the site are not full size which may limit the users, only appealing to youth football teams. The multi-use games area (MUGA) is also a potential constraint, despite its continued use, restricting the development opportunities to the north of the site. As mentioned above in the context section of this report, toilet provision on site is lacking and struggles to cope with high visitor numbers in peak season. Strategically placing additional toilets around the site would greatly improve the visitor experience.
- 3.48 Infrastructure in the vicinity of the destination park is of good quality, with access from the A131 and within a short distance of the junction with the A120 to the north. These roads have a high carrying capacity for vehicles and can support large visitor numbers to GNCP in the peak seasons. Constraints in relation to infrastructure are more focused around the access road onto the site, with only a single vehicular access point located towards the north of the site to the east of the discovery centre. With the predicted increase in visitor numbers as a result of the quantum of development proposed in the BDC Local Plan, it would be beneficial to examine the effectiveness of this access with the view to potentially widening and extending the road onto the site.
- 3.49 Expansion of the park is a possible solution for the struggling capacity during peak times however the boundary of GNCP is constrained on three sides. To the east of the site, the A131 delineates the site boundary and further east of that is the settlement of Great Notley. To the north and the south are areas of land covered in employment policy in the BDC Local Plan. If an extension to the site was required, the only potential option would be to extend into Uttlesford District. This is discussed in more detail in subsequent sections of this report.



## 4. Stakeholder Analysis

### GNCP Strategic Review Workshop

- 4.1 This report amalgamates data from a wide range of sources to provide a holistic baseline to inform master planning. Initially, a strategic review was undertaken involving officers from BDC, ECC and rangers of GNCP, facilitated by Place Services.
- 4.2 The first half of the workshop concentrated on the situation at GNCP today and the second part of the workshop focused on the future vision for GNCP. These are grouped together into themes where more than one attendee has made similar comments. Once collated, this information was utilised to provide a framework for the production of the baseline report and provided an outline of the aims and key points to address in this report.
- 4.3 Seasonality of the park affects visitor numbers significantly as all of the facilities with the exception of the Discovery Centre are located outdoors. Officer stakeholders identified this issue as park of the workshop and it is likely to be beneficial to examine the potential for additional indoor activities on the site to exploit the winter season tourism. As noted in the context section of this report, there is an identified potential for visitors throughout the low season months and indoor activities could provide the opportunity to attract tourists in poor weather.
- 4.4 Contrasts exist in the uses presently within the site, between destination park visitors and the local use sports pitches. The formal organised sports activities currently facilitated at GNCP have conflicted with the conservation and environmental aspects of the Country Park. This has given rise to some operational problems which has proved difficult to mediate between the two uses. Additional provision of these uses concurrently on the site could lead to an escalation of this conflict and the possibility of relocating the formal sports use may potentially provide benefits for both uses.
- 4.5 The notion of providing a new location for the car park was raised at the strategic review workshop. Relocating the car park further from the road could reduce the potential for traffic queues by providing more road space on site and could allow for extra parking provision and a better designed traffic system through the access road, car park and exit road.
- 4.6 Following on from this point, signage and a site map would provide clearer direction on how to access the site and it would improve the flow of visitors away from the car park area and discovery centre as they would not need assistance to locate the activities. The potential disadvantage of additional signposts, particularly signage to the different attractions located at the park, is that visitors may plan a more structured visit to one area of the park and not explore other areas. Whereas currently people may plan to come to the park for one activity but discover another activity also of interest by exploring the park due to the lack of direction, this may not occur if additional signposts are introduced.
- 4.7 Data from the GNCP Survey indicates that as anticipated, visitors from outside the Braintree area stay longer in the park due to the increased travel time whereas residents of Braintree have the convenience for short distance trips for short visits. Of the people travelling from outside Braintree, 46% stay for a duration of 2-4 hours and 30% stay for 4 or more hours and this would be unlikely to be affected by increased signage as the travel distance creates a desire to extend the visit. Currently the vast majority of visitors from Braintree stay for 1-2 or 2-4 hours (84%). Increased signage could result in a shift in this trend with the duration of stay reducing when visitors can easily locate an activity of interest identified before arriving at the park and declining to explore the other activities on offer.



## GNCP Survey

- 4.8 The GNCP Survey formed part of the evidence base for this report. Available for participation for three months, residents of the Braintree District were given the opportunity to share their views on GNCP through a survey questionnaire. A total of 704 people took part, answering a series of questions around how they use the park, what they think about the facilities and if anything could be improved or added

The objectives of the survey were to:

- Identify key visitors and how they use GNCP;
- Gather opinion of park facilities;
- Identify areas for improvement;
- Identify features/facilities people would like added to the park;
- Gauge general opinion of GNCP.

The survey methodology was to target people who lived in the Braintree District area. It aimed to collate the opinions of both users and non-users of GNCP, representing all demographics. The survey was available online and in hard copy formats between 17<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017. The survey was promoted on social media, the BDC and Visit Parks website, in email to Braintree residents and GovDelivery newsletters, internally to BDC and ECC staff, onsite at GNCP and Cressing Temple and through PR with Braintree and Witham Times. A total of 704 people took part in the survey with an average of 350 people answered each question.

- 4.9 Of those surveyed 36% of people visit the park at least once every six months. This is closely followed by 31% of people who visit at least once a month. 18% of respondents were frequent visitors, going at least once a week and 7% visit two or three times a week. 99% of people had visited the park at least once before, and only 3% of those would not want to visit again.
- 4.10 Overall, people rated the facilities favourably. The most popular mark for signage (38% of people), Sky Ropes (45% of people), cleanliness (41% of people), facilities (38% of people), Staff (39% of people), site maintenance (41% of people), value for money (33%), overall satisfaction (50% of people) was 4 out of 5. Football pitches and car parking were rated 3 out of five by 40% and 30% of people, respectively. Views were most spread across car parking. Car parking and value for money had the most responses rated 1 out of 5 with 51% and 23% respectively, relating to the charges for car parking on site and the availability of a sufficient number of parking spaces.
- 4.11 96% of people would recommend the park to someone else. 25% of people consider GNCP to be good for families and a day out with 17% also saying there is a lot to do there. 9% described it as a lovely open space and 6% that it was great for walks or walking the dog. 19% think it is too expensive to park and 6% that the facilities need improving. 12 respondents stated that they experienced issues with cleanliness of the site, attributed to a lack of bins and subsequent litter. 53% of people left positive comments about the park in general and 23% of people mentioned the high cost of parking.
- 4.12 29% of people felt the facilities, namely the toilets and café needed improving. Answers mainly suggested more toilets were needed further around the play trail and more space in the café. 20% of people suggested lowering the price of car parking. The introduction of rubbish bins was also a popular suggestion (16% of people). Other suggestions included fixing broken equipment and improving footpaths, increasing signage, improving fishing, and more seating and picnic areas, all of which had less than 20 respondents who voiced them as issues.
- 4.13 Many suggestions for facilities and features that respondents would like to see introduced on GNCP were put forward and grouped into key themes. 17% of people would like see more elements added to the play trail, such as new equipment. 16% would like more toilets, especially at the far end of the park, along with more refreshment outlets (8% of people). 11% of people would also like to see more seating or picnic areas. Other suggestions were



more wildlife locations, cheaper parking, cycling facilities, more bins, more shaded areas and a splash park or water park for the peak months.

## Local Plan Progress for Relevant Local Authorities

- 4.14 BDC undertook an 8 week public consultation on a Draft Local Plan (Preferred Options stage) in June 2016. Previously, Braintree consulted on a Local Plan Issues and Scoping Report in January – March 2015. BDC is scheduled to consult on a Pre-Submission Local Plan in summer 2017.
- 4.15 BDC's Draft Local Plan commits to meet the District's OAN for housing through strategic growth commensurate to the District's settlement hierarchy, with the majority of growth in and around the settlements of Braintree and Witham. The Plan included a number of preferred strategic growth allocations, including: a new Garden Community to the immediate West of Braintree, a new cross-boundary Garden Community to the east of the District with Colchester, and also strategic scale urban extensions of the main towns, notably including an allocation of approximately 2,000 new dwellings to the east of Great Notley.
- 4.16 Colchester Borough Council undertook consultation on a Draft Local Plan, which outlined the Council's preferred options for growth in the Borough in July 2016. Colchester Borough Council is scheduled to consult on a Pre-Submission Local Plan in summer 2017.
- 4.17 Tendring District Council consulted on an Issues and Options Local Plan in 2015. Representing the first stage in the plan-making process, this involved the LPA exploring 'issues and options' across the District in order to develop spatial strategy selection and scenarios surrounding growth. Tendring consulted on a Preferred Options Local Plan in summer 2016 and are scheduled to consult again on a Pre-Submission Local Plan in summer 2017.
- 4.18 Chelmsford City Council undertook consultation on their Issues and Options stage of the Local Plan between November 2015 and January 2016. The responses have fed into the Preferred Options document which is currently in preparation and will be considered by the Development Policy Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017, with a view to conduct public consultation between March and May 2017.

## Local Plan Policy

- 4.19 The table below shows the Objectively Assessed Housing Need of Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester and Tendring over the plan period. This data gives an indication of the quantum of development that can be expected across these areas to indicate the potential expansion of the customer base for GNCP.

**Table 4: Objectively Assessed Housing Needs (OAHN) in the Housing Market Area (HMA) 2018-2036**

| Administrative Area | Dwellings per annum | Total over period 2018-2036* |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Braintree DC        | 716                 | 12,888                       |
| Chelmsford CC       | 805                 | 14,490                       |
| Colchester BC       | 920                 | 16,560                       |
| Tendring DC         | 550                 | 9,900                        |
| Totals              | 2,291               | 53,838                       |

\* Based on an assumed Local Plan adoption of 2018 for all emerging Local Plans and an 18 year period commensurate to the plan period of the emerging Chelmsford CC Local Plan.





Source: BDC, Chelmsford City Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council - Objectively Assessed Housing Need Study November 2016 update (Peter Brett Associates)

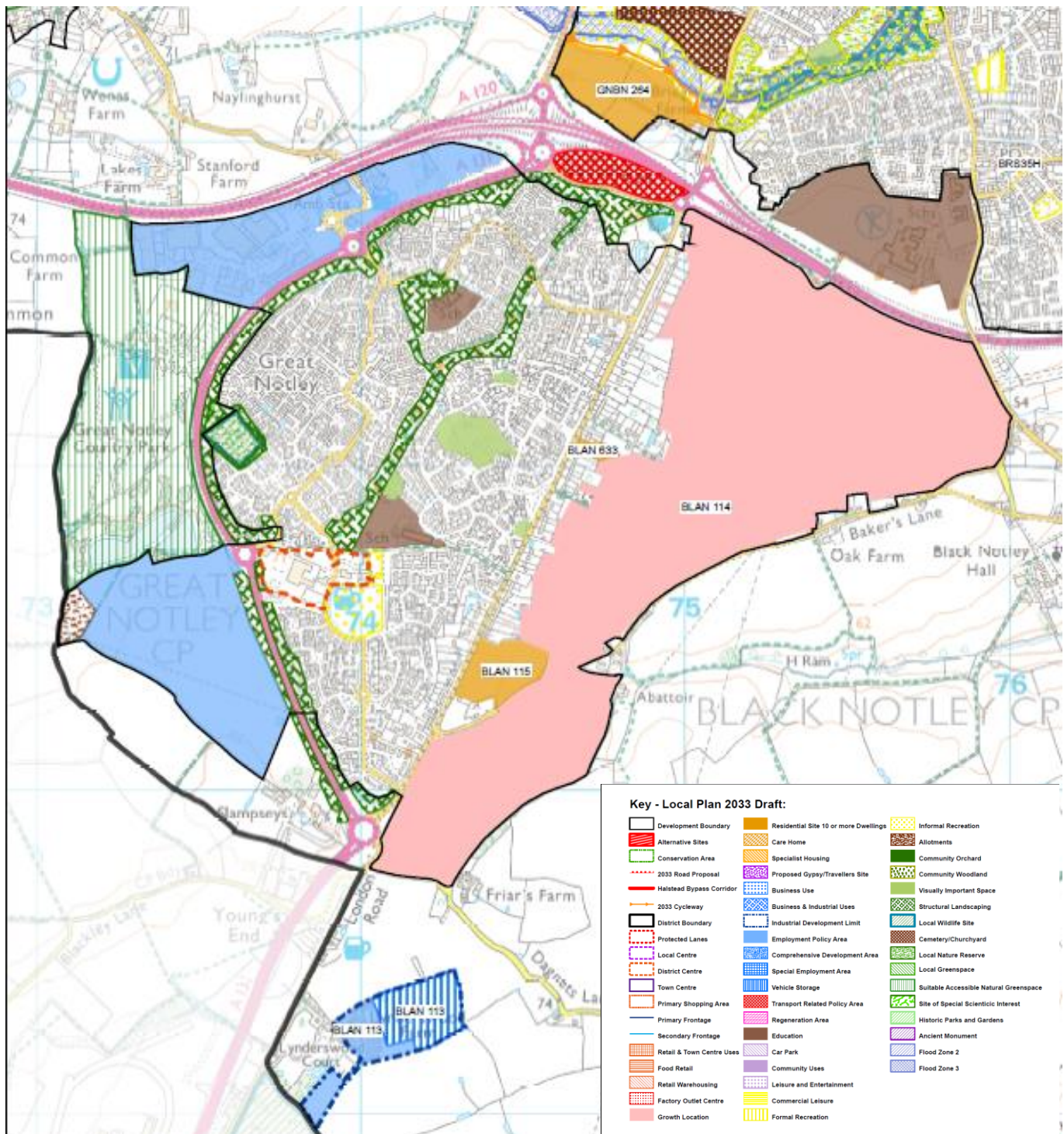
- 4.20 Braintree district must plan for 12,888 new dwellings over the period 2018-2036 the second lowest figure of the four local authorities listed above. The highest growth will be in Colchester where 16,560 new homes must be planned for, followed by Chelmsford at 14,490 and Tendring at 9,900. Owing to its status as a destination park, GNCP attracts visitors from significant distances and so tourists from all of the above administrative areas are likely to visit. The total additional dwellings to be planned for over the period of 2018-2036 between all of the above administrative areas is 53,838 which represents a substantial level of growth within the customer base of the site.

## **Braintree Draft Local Plan**

### **Braintree Draft Local Plan Allocations Map (2016)**

- 4.21 The figure below is the Braintree District Draft Local Plan Allocations Map and demonstrates the constraints on the site from Local Plan policy and allocations. The area to the north is currently in use as employment land and to the south of the site is an employment policy area. The only unconstrained land is to the west which is located predominantly within Uttlesford District. This is land is discussed further in the Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment section of this report.
- 4.22 It is also worth highlighting that a significant housing allocation is present east of Great Notley referenced BLAN 114. This allocation is identified in the Braintree District Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2016) as delivering a potential yield of 2000 dwellings which could represent a considerable opportunity to increase the customer base for the site when considered along with the West of Braintree Garden Community and the quantum of development proposed within Braintree District.

**Figure 4: Braintree District Draft Local Plan Allocation Map**



Source: Braintree Draft Local Plan Allocations Map (2016)



## Braintree Open Space, Sports and Recreational Facilities Study (2016)

4.23 Four reports are published within the overall Braintree Open Space, Sports and Recreational Facilities Study (2016). The reports comprise:

- Part 1: Open Space Study;
- Part 2: Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment;
- Part 3: Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan; and,
- Part 4: Built Sports and Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment and Strategy.

4.24 The four reports are all informed by the Local Needs Assessment Report (Consultation Report) which provides details of the consultation undertaken as part of the study.

## Braintree (Draft) Open Space Study 2016 – 2033

4.25 The Open Space Study is a robust assessment of needs and deficiencies in open spaces in order to establish local provision standards and create an up to date evidence base which can be maintained to aid implementation of the policies and the provision of open spaces during the new Local Plan period. The following statistics arose from the Citizen's Panel/Household survey and Public Health stakeholders.

## Parks, green spaces, countryside and rights of way

### Quantity

4.26 A majority of People's Panel respondents thought that overall there were enough parks, gardens and recreation grounds (59%) and areas for water recreation (59%) to meet local need.

4.27 In contrast a majority of Panel respondents thought that overall there were not enough footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths (58%); country parks, accessible countryside and woodlands (59%); wildlife areas and nature reserves (62%); allotments (55%); and informal open spaces (62%).

## Audit of Existing Open Space Assets

**Table 5: Existing provision of open space across Braintree District**

| Typology                              | Existing provision (ha) | Existing provision (ha/1000 population) |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Allotments                            | 31.19                   | 0.21                                    |
| Amenity Green Space                   | 135.32                  | 0.92                                    |
| Park and Recreation Ground (combined) | 124.04                  | 0.85                                    |
| Park and Recreation Ground            | 101.33                  | 0.69                                    |
| Outdoor Sport (Pitches)               | 21.65                   | 0.15                                    |
| Outdoor Sport (Fixed)                 | 1.06                    | 0.01                                    |
| Outdoor Sport (Private)               | 66.73                   | 0.46                                    |
| Play Space (Children)                 | 7.96                    | 0.05                                    |
| Play Space (Youth)                    | 1.77                    | 0.01                                    |
| Accessible Natural Green Space        | 414.77                  | 2.83                                    |
| Education                             | 109.03                  | 0.74                                    |



|                            |       |      |
|----------------------------|-------|------|
| Churchyards and Cemeteries | 54.92 | 0.37 |
|----------------------------|-------|------|

Source: Braintree (Draft) Open Space Study 2016 – 2033

4.28 The table above states that the typology of open space with the highest prevalence in Braintree is accessible natural green space, some 279.45ha more than the next most common typology of amenity green space. The type of open space with the least coverage in the district is fixed outdoor sports pitches of which there is just 1.06 ha. This also represents the lowest provision per 1000 population alongside play space for youths, both of which register 0.01ha per 1000. Allotments, outdoor sports pitches, outdoor sports private space, play space for children and churchyards and cemeteries all have less than 0.50ha per 1000 provision. Amenity green space, park and recreation ground (combined), park and recreation ground and education open spaces all have better provision within the district at higher than 0.50ha per 1000 population.

4.29 As a consequence of the above identified existing provisions, open space standards are outlined in the Braintree (Draft) Open Space Study 2016 – 2033 stipulating the minimum required provisions for new developments. These standards should be applied proportionately according to the scale of the development.

**Table 6: Summary of space standards**

| Typology  | Quantity standards (ha / 1000 population)                         | Access standard                        |
|---|---|--|
| Allotments (and Community Gardens)              | 0.25  | 480m or 10 mins walk time              |
| Amenity Green Space                             | 1.00 (see standard for Natural Green Space).                      | 480m or 10 mins walk time              |
| Park and Recreation Ground (public and private) | 1.40  | 480m or 10 mins walk time              |
| Play Space (Children)                           | 0.05  | 480m or 10 mins walk time              |
| Play Space (Youth)                              | 0.03  | 600m or 12-13 mins walk time           |
| Natural Green Space                             | 1.00 to include natural and amenity green space for new provision | ANGSt for analysing existing provision |
| Churchyards and Cemeteries                      | None  | None                                   |
| Education                                       | None  | None                                   |
| Total for new provision                         | 2.73 ha / 1000  |  |

Source: Braintree (Draft) Open Space Study 2016 – 2033

4.30 The table above, the space standards expected from new developments were produced following the examination of existing open space provision in the district. They can therefore be used as an indication of the need for open space in the future in the light of the quantum of development likely to occur in Braintree. Park and recreation grounds both public and private are required at the highest quantity at 1.40 ha per 1000 population, followed by amenity green space and natural green space both requiring 1.00 ha per 1000 population. These spaces should be provided within 480m of the development site with the exception of play spaces for youths which can be provided within 600m.





**Table 7: Provision of open space in urban analysis areas (ha)**

| Ward                                | Allotments | Amenity Green Space | Park and Receptions Ground (Public and Private) | Play Space (Children) | Play Space (Youth) | Accessible Natural Green Space |
|-------------------------------------|------------|---------------------|---|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bocking Blackwater                  | -2.16      | 15.07               | 3.50  | -0.41                 | -0.23              | 1.94                           |
| Bocking North                       | -0.01      | 12.98               | -1.40   | -0.13                 | -0.14              | 0.00                           |
| Bocking South                       | -0.72      | 1.27                | 0.12  | -0.20                 | -0.08              | 1.88                           |
| Braintree Central and Beckers Green | -2.05      | -6.34               | 5.69  | -0.33                 | -0.27              | 0.38                           |
| Braintree South                     | -0.27      | -1.84               | -3.92   | -0.17                 | -0.16              | 8.35                           |
| Braintree West                      | -1.53      | 6.41                | -7.38   | -0.01                 | -0.18              | 13.72                          |
| Bumpstead                           | 0.00       | 3.60                | 0.40  | 0.11                  | -0.06              | 3.73                           |
| Coggeshall                          | 1.45       | -3.84               | 11.89   | 0.18                  | -0.15              | 46.49                          |
| Gosfield and Greenstead Green       | -0.27      | -2.17               | 4.41  | 0.17                  | -0.07              | 85.12                          |
| Great Notley and Black Notley       | -2.02      | 0.21                | -7.34   | 1.29                  | -0.21              | 50.92                          |
| Halstead St Andrews                 | 4.28       | -4.73               | -3.11   | -0.20                 | -0.17              | 24.99                          |
| Halstead Trinity                    | -0.39      | -4.90               | -3.95   | -0.09                 | -0.11              | 6.48                           |
| Hatfield Peverel and Terling        | 2.61       | 0.91                | 4.80  | 0.06                  | -0.12              | 19.41                          |
| Hedingham                           | -0.43      | -0.27               | -1.85   | -0.12                 | 0.00               | 67.97                          |
| Kelvedon and Feering                | 0.43       | -4.03               | -0.54   | 0.54                  | -0.01              | 5.27                           |
| Rayne                               | 1.27       | -1.91               | 0.45  | -0.09                 | -0.05              | 45.88                          |
| Silver End and Cressing             | -0.97      | -3.35               | 2.08  | -0.12                 | -0.09              | 7.68                           |
| Stour Valley North                  | 0.55       | 0.90                | -0.45   | 0.04                  | -0.07              | 2.86                           |
| Stour Valley South                  | 1.63       | -1.30               | 2.50  | -0.08                 | -0.08              | 0.62                           |
| The Colnes                          | -0.66      | -2.69               | -3.38   | 0.21                  | -0.16              | 85.14                          |
| Three Fields                        | -0.93      | 1.94                | 6.42  | 0.45                  | -0.15              | 6.21                           |

| Ward           | Allotments | Amenity Green Space | Park and Recreations Ground (Public and Private) | Play Space (Children) | Play Space (Youth) | Accessible Natural Green Space |
|----------------|------------|---------------------|--|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Witham Central | -1.50      | 2.18                | 1.31   | -0.11                 | -0.18              | 33.93                          |
| Witham North   | -0.16      | -4.00               | -3.46  | -0.28                 | -0.16              | 22.50                          |
| Witham South   | -1.52      | 2.55                | -8.51  | -0.28                 | -0.18              | 15.65                          |
| Witham West    | -1.75      | 6.98                | 10.01  | -0.05                 | 0.03               | 27.26                          |
| Yeldham        | -0.06      | -1.24               | 2.12   | 0.25                  | 0.43               | 0.00                           |

Source: Braintree (Draft) Open Space Study 2016 – 2033

- 4.31 Allotment space within the district is lacking across the majority of wards in Braintree. Bocking Blackwater, Braintree Central and Beckers Green and Great Notley and Black Notley are all in deficit of allotment space by over 2 ha. In contrast, Halstead St Andrews has a surplus of 4.28 ha of allotment space with other high surpluses from Hatfield Peverel and Terling and Stour Valley South, registering 2.61 ha and 1.63 ha respectively.
- 4.32 Braintree Central and Beckers Green also have a deficit of amenity green space, measured at a more substantial value of -6.34 ha than for allotment space. Halstead Trinity and Halstead St Andrews register the next highest deficits of -4.90 and -4.73 ha respectively. There are significant surpluses present within the district for amenity green space, particularly in Bocking Blackwater and Bocking North where there is an over provision of 15.07 ha and 12.98 ha respectively.
- 4.33 Witham South has the highest deficit of parks and recreation grounds (public and private) at -8.51. The next highest wards are Braintree West (7.38 ha) and Great Notley and Black Notley (7.34 ha). Coggeshall and Witham West have the highest surpluses at 11.89 ha and 10.01 ha respectively.
- 4.34 Children's play space has less variation in surplus and deficits across the wards, but the highest deficit is Bocking Blackwater at -0.41 ha followed by Witham North and Witham South, both in a deficit of 0.28 ha. Great Notley and Black Notley ward has the highest surplus at 1.29 ha followed by Kelvedon and Feering which has a surplus of 0.54 ha.
- 4.35 Braintree Central ward has the highest deficit of play space for youths in Braintree at -0.27 ha, followed by Beckers Green Bocking Blackwater at -0.23 ha. There are only 2 wards in surplus of this open space typology. These are Yeldham and Witham West which registered 0.43 ha and 0.03 ha surpluses respectively.
- 4.36 No wards in Braintree are in deficit in terms of accessible natural green space. The highest provision of the typology is The Colnes with 85.14 ha surplus closely followed by Gosfield and Greenstead Green with 85.12 ha. Great Notley and Black Notley also registered a high surplus of accessible natural green space at 50.92 ha, but Braintree West and Braintree South have lower surpluses of 13.72 ha and 8.35 ha.

Source: Braintree (Draft) Open Space Study 2016 – 2033

### **Braintree Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Study (2016)**

4.37 Overall aims of the study are:

- To audit existing indoor/outdoor leisure facilities and open spaces within the Braintree District (irrespective of ownership and extent of existing public access, including school playing fields);



- To assess these facilities in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility;
- To develop and provide a strategy determining the actions and resources required to guide the Councils decision making up until 2033 (this is to include a Playing Pitch Strategy, Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy and an Open Spaces Strategy);
- To highlight areas where there is sufficient or over provision and identify areas where there are deficiencies in either the quantity and/or quality of provision;
- To provide a robust and comprehensive evidence base to enable the Council to develop planning policies as part of future Local Plan, sufficient to withstand scrutiny at an Examination in Public;
- To provide information to enable the Council to justify collecting developer contributions and inform the Council on the distribution of developer contributions to sports and open spaces;
- Identify strategies for the delivery of required provision and enhancement and to inform future decisions about the provision and funding of recreational facilities;
- To provide a needs assessment and provide a comprehensive set of recommendations for local standards and alternative approaches to securing provision where applicable to be adopted by the Council and review current standards in the adopted Core Strategy and how these have helped new development and Parishes/Town Councils provide more; and
- To provide guidance on converting standards into developer contributions.

### Overview of Pitch provision in the Local Authority

4.38 The following totals all known football, cricket, rugby grass pitches in the local authority. Not all of these will be theoretically available in practice for community use.

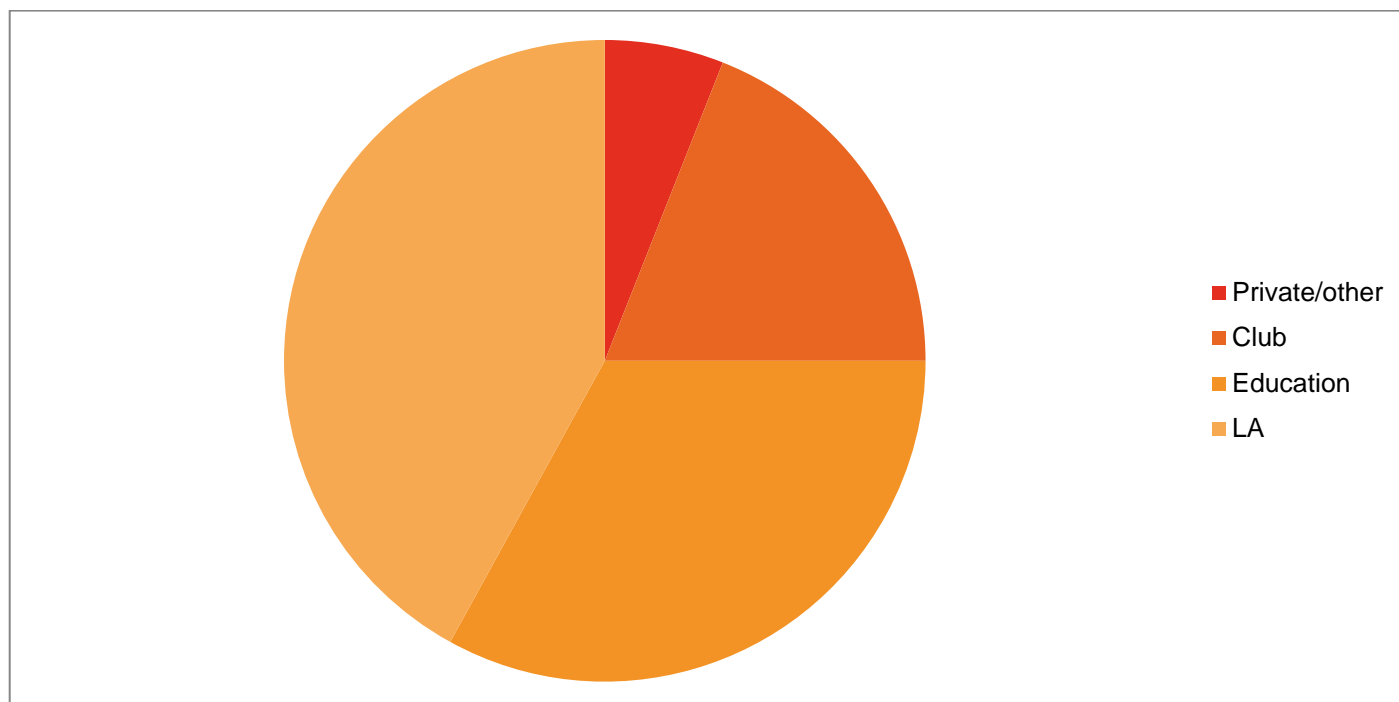
**Table 8: Grass pitch provision in the Local Authority**

| Adult Football | Youth Football (11v11) | Youth Football (9v9) | Minisoccer (7v7) | Minisoccer (5v5) | Cricket Fields | Adult Rugby |
|----------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|-------------|
| 70             | 6                      | 12                   | 23               | 35               | 13             | 15          |

Source: Braintree Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Study (2016)

4.39 Of the 174 pitches most are noted as being in the 'public sector'. The breakdown of ownership is as follows. Local authorities (which includes both Braintree Council and local parish and town councils) are the largest provider. The education sector and club sector are both also significant providers.

**Figure 5: Ownership by sector**



Source: Braintree Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Study (2016)

- 4.40 AGPs are now accepted as essential facilities for match play for hockey and football, and for rugby training.
- 4.41 Various sites (especially a significant number of primary/junior schools) have grass spaces, but which are not formally marked as pitches (at least at the time of the study). These have been identified as part of the wider assessment and site identification process. Playing fields last used as such, but which are now closed, but undeveloped have also been identified. Some junior provision appears to be relatively low compared to the number of such teams playing in local leagues. Data suggests that many mini-soccer and other junior/youth teams share playing surfaces with teams from older age groups.
- 4.42 The focus of the largest provisions is within the main population centres. The most demand for pitches is where the availability of additional land to make further provision will be most challenging. The planned population change may alter the geographical demand for such facilities, especially in areas of rapid and large population growth.

#### **Braintree Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan (2016)**

- 4.43 The Open Spaces Action Plan sets out a list of outline proposals for the provision and enhancement of open spaces in Braintree District. Its purpose is to demonstrate the need for the provision and enhancement of open spaces and to enable Council officers to demonstrate where financial contributions being sought from developers under the Open Spaces Supplementary Planning Document will be spent.
- 4.44 The proposals are set out in a table which includes schemes identified for Council owned open spaces, schemes identified by town and parish councils and other proposed open space enhancements for which as yet there are no outline details.
- 4.45 The Great Notley and Black Notley ward is in closest proximity to GNCP. The more significant elements of the action plan for these wards are summarised in the table below.



**Table 9: Great Notley and Black Notley action plan**

| Parish                        | Green Space Strategy deficit | Location                                     | Improvements required (to existing facilities)  | Improvements required (new facilities)                           | Ownership                                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Black Notley                  |                              | Cokers Peace                                 | Tree and shrub planting, make accessible for public use and suitable for wildlife to inhabit, signage, wheelchair access, planting, seating, bins and dog waste bins. | Parking  | Parish Council owned (deeds seen)          |
|                               |                              | John Ray Millennium Green, Black Notley      | Signage, first aid equipment, surfacing, seating, litter bins and dog waste bins.   | Cycle and disability parking                                     | Owned by Millennium trust (deeds not seen) |
| Great Notley                  |                              | Amenity green space – Buttermere White Court | Nature conservation around pond   | First aid / emergency equipment, railings and information boards | BDC ownership                              |
|                               |                              | RAFT, Notley green, Great Notley, CM77 7US   | Provision and improvement of equipment for use of teenagers (requires a feasibility study)  | nil  | BDC ownership                              |
|                               |                              | Panners Pond and Panners Field               | Playing pitch improvement, improve conditions of land adjacent to the pond which is rough and boggy at present  | nil  | BDC ownership                              |
|                               |                              | Open space at Notley Green primary School    | Playing pitch improvement   | nil  | County ownership                           |
|                               |                              | Levens Way playground CM77 7XB               | Upgrade and maintain play equipment   | nil  | ECC managed by Great Notley Parish Council |
|                               |                              | GNCP   | Signage and litter bins   | Information facilities   | Managed by ECC in partnership with BDC     |
| Great Notley / Braintree West | Children's play (-0.9 ha)    |  |   |  |  |
| Great Notley / Braintree West | Formal open space (-7.9 ha)  |  |   |  |  |

Source: Braintree Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan (2016)



## **Braintree (Draft) Built Spots and Recreation Facilities Study (Needs Assessment) (2016)**

4.46 This report is predominantly concerned with the provision of sports and leisure centres within the district. GNCP does not have any facilities that would be in direct competition with these, but the information outlined below could be useful in determining the potential for expanding uses on GNCP and where the market is already saturated.

### **Local authority and other key leisure centres**

4.47 Braintree Leisure Centre (this is a joint use centre with Tabor Academy) - sports hall, gym, studio, ATP, netball/tennis courts, 400m track (with shot put and javelin cages).

4.48 Issues/features identified:

- The building was completed in late 1980s/early 90s and was recently refurbished internally; forthcoming maintenance/development includes eventual replacement of the athletics track within some 5-8 years;
- The extended fitness gym is divided to accommodate both school and public use.

Source: Braintree (Draft) Built Spots and Recreation Facilities Study (Needs Assessment) (2016)

4.49 Braintree Swimming and Fitness (formerly Braintree Swimming Centre) - 25m x 8 lane (17m) pool, leisure/learner pool, 250+ seats, fitness gym (30 stations), exercise studio.

4.50 Issues/features identified:

- Building completed in 2008;
- Limited catering through vending operation;
- Fitness Gym has c.30 stations plus multi-function equipment;
- The centre has c.1200 members (Fusion Choice allowing multi-site access);
- Main swimming club is Braintree and Bocking Swimming Club. There are circa.1500 people enrolled at the centre's swim school;
- A good location, with considerable adjacent footfall, for possible location of additional dry facilities, although not built on Council land.

Source: Braintree (Draft) Built Spots and Recreation Facilities Study (Needs Assessment) (2016)

4.51 Halstead Leisure Centre - 25m x 5 lane swimming pool, freeform learner pool, 5 badminton court size sports hall, c.55 station gym, dance studio, spinning studio (12 x cycles), exercise studio, squash courts, ATP (school games and football), MUGA, creche.

4.52 Issues/features identified:

- A Joint Use centre with Ramsey Academy; the public have daytime use of the pool and the gym and all facilities after 5 p.m.;
- Ageing sports hall shows evidence of insulation boards to improve environmental conditions; Granwood floor;
- It is intended that the existing sand-based ATP is replaced to strengthen its use as a hockey facility;
- The Swimming Club (Dolphins) attracts some 650 members per week;
- The catering area is adjacent to the Reception area is serviced by vending machines.

Source: Braintree (Draft) Built Spots and Recreation Facilities Study (Needs Assessment) (2016)

4.53 Witham Leisure Centre - 25m x 8 lane pool, learner pool, 2 x squash courts gym (c. 55 stations plus multi-function equipment), studio, multi-purpose hall, ATP.

4.54 Issues/features identified:



- A new leisure centre, completed and opened in 2014;
- Particularly well appointed and spacious designed, meeting the user requirements of participants and spectators alike;
- Includes a combined heat and power (CHP) unit for added efficiency;
- A strong swimming school;
- Maltings Academy has a protected bookings agreement at Witham Sports Ground nearby (including use of the ATP).

Source: Braintree (Draft) Built Spots and Recreation Facilities Study (Needs Assessment) (2016)

### **Earls Colne Recreation Club**

4.55 Also of particular significance is the Earls Colne Recreation Club on the Halstead Road (A1124) (2 squash courts, 2 x badminton court size sports hall, fitness suite. 4 x macadam tennis courts, sports ground (football, cricket). This is privately operated.

### **School and College Facilities**

4.56 Education based sports facilities include:

- Maltings Academy - close to the Witham Leisure Centre and STP;
- The New Rickstones Academy - sports hall, dance studio;
- Alec Hunter Academy - 4 court badminton sports hall; Gym;
- Honywood School - sports hall;
- Ramsey Academy - joint use of Halstead Leisure Centre (see above);
- Hedingham School - sports hall, gym;
- Notley High School - 5 badminton court sports hall, 3 badminton court hall, gymnasium;
- Tabor Academy - joint use of Braintree Leisure Centre (see above);
- Braintree College - 6 badminton court sports hall

4.57 All the above secondary schools/colleges allow community use of their indoor sports facilities (to varying degrees). There are no firm plans for additional indoor facilities.

Source: Braintree (Draft) Built Spots and Recreation Facilities Study (Needs Assessment) (2016)

### **Neighbouring Local Authority Facilities**

4.58 Important built sports facilities are provided within neighbouring boroughs which attract use by residents of Braintree District now and in the future due to:

- Location and accessibility;
- Special interest activities, or
- Ambience and personal preference.

4.59 Similarly, residents of neighbouring boroughs utilise facilities provided within Braintree District. Significant neighbouring facilities offering multi-activity sports halls, fitness gyms, swimming pools, include:

- Colchester Leisure World (east);
- Maldon, Blackwater Leisure Centre (south-east);
- Chelmsford, Riverside Ice and Leisure Centre (south-east);
- Harlow Sports Centre (south-west);
- Great Dunmow Leisure Centre (west);
- Haverhill Leisure Centre (north-west);
- Saffron Walden, Lord Butler Fitness and Leisure Centre (north-west);



- Sudbury Sport Centre (north-east).

## Uttlesford Local Plan

- 4.60 Lying across the housing market areas of Harlow M11 and Cambridge, the Uttlesford Housing Strategy draws data from three Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) published in 2012, 2012 and 2015. The most up to date SHMA concludes that 46,058 homes are required across the market areas and this figure is distributed evenly among the four Local Authorities within the housing market area but with the release of new household projections in July 2016 the requirement is likely to be higher than originally calculated.
- 4.61 The Spatial Options Study identified the best option for housing distribution within the HMA The proposed option of 51,100 represents 'planning positively for growth', as it is higher than both the established OAHN within the published 2015 SHMA (46,100), and the number suggested by the 2012-based CLG household projections alone (49,638 dwellings).
- 4.62 The SHMA identified need for 12,500 homes between 2011 and 2033 (568 dwellings per annum) in Uttlesford. It also identifies a high requirement for affordable housing, with this need increasing with rising house prices. In order to meet its affordable housing need a housing requirement based on the trend based forecasts is most likely to provide the greatest amount of affordable housing. Emerging updates to the SHMA indicate that this figure (representing the OAN for the District) could now be as high as 14,000 homes over the plan period.
- 4.63 The Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan identifies 2,968 dwellings as allocations and commitments in Great Dunmow. As a major settlement in Uttlesford and relatively proximate to GNCP (approximately 10km west along the A120), the growth in Great Dunmow is likely to increase the customer base for the site and additional facilities could accommodate further visitors from the quantum of development.

## Uttlesford Open Space, Sport Facility and Playing Strategy (2012)

- 4.64 The Uttlesford Open Space, Sport Facility and Playing Strategy (January 2012) outlines the results of the Green Space Strategy Audit undertaken within the district, which includes an assessment of both existing open space provision and the adequacy of outdoor sports provision based upon the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) standard.
- 4.65 The audit considered accessible green space of 0.15 hectares or more within the 15 largest parishes in the District. All parishes had a population of over 1000. The audit utilised a number of the green space types identified in PPG17, namely allotments, amenity green space, natural and semi-natural green space, outdoor sports provision, parks and gardens, and provision for children and young people. An assessment was made of the value of each green space to users in terms of accessibility, cleanliness and maintenance, safety, biodiversity and attractiveness.
- 4.66 The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) Standard: The standard was produced as a general guide to the adequacy of provision of 'space that is safely accessible and available to the general public and of a suitable size and nature, for sport, active recreation or children's play'. It has two components:
- a) Outdoor sport: Facilities such as pitches, greens, courts, athletics tracks and miscellaneous sites such as croquet lawns and training areas. These should be provided at a minimum level of 1.6ha per 1,000 people.
  - b) Children's playing space: Designated areas for children and young people containing a range of facilities and an environment that has been designed to provide focused opportunities for outdoor play. These should be provided at a minimum level of 0.8ha per 1,000 people.

**Table 10: Larger parishes: Children's play space assessment**

| Parish             | Existing playing space (ha) | Playing space per 1,000 population | NPFA requirement for parish (ha) | Surplus / deficit for parish (ha) |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Clavering          | 2.8                         | 2.4                                | 2.8                              | 0                                 |
| Dunmow             | 11.8                        | 1.7                                | 16.8                             | -5.0                              |
| Elsenham           | 3.7                         | 1.5                                | 5.8                              | -2.1                              |
| Felsted            | 3.1                         | 1.1                                | 6.8                              | -3.7                              |
| Great Chesterford  | 3.2                         | 2.2                                | 3.4                              | -0.2                              |
| Hatfield Broad Oak | 2.0                         | 1.7                                | 2.8                              | -0.8                              |
| Hatfield Heath     | 1.6                         | 1.0                                | 4.0                              | -2.4                              |
| Henham             | 2.6                         | 2.2                                | 2.8                              | -0.2                              |
| Little Hallingbury | 2.4                         | 1.7                                | 3.4                              | -1.0                              |
| Newport            | 4.4                         | 2.2                                | 5.3                              | -0.9                              |
| Saffron Walden     | 13.0                        | 0.9                                | 36.2                             | -23.2                             |
| Stansted           | 4.8                         | 0.9                                | 13.3                             | -8.5                              |
| Stebbing           | 4.5                         | 3.5                                | 3.1                              | 1.4                               |
| Takeley            | 7.2                         | 3.1                                | 5.5                              | 1.7                               |
| Thaxted            | 3.9                         | 1.4                                | 6.2                              | -2.3                              |

**Table 11: Urban wards: Children's play space assessment**

| Parish                | Existing playing space (ha) | Playing space per 1,000 population | NPFA requirement for parish (ha) | Surplus / deficit for parish (ha) |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Great Dunmow North    | 8.2                         | 3.2                                | 6.1                              | 2.1                               |
| Great Dunmow South    | 3.5                         | 0.8                                | 10.8                             | -7.3                              |
| Saffron Walden Audley | 2.0                         | 0.4                                | 11.1                             | -9.1                              |
| Saffron Walden Castle | 4.9                         | 1.0                                | 11.7                             | -6.8                              |
| Saffron Walden Shire  | 6.1                         | 1.2                                | 12.2                             | -6.1                              |
| Stansted North        | 2.5                         | 0.8                                | 7.6                              | -5.1                              |
| Stansted South        | 2.3                         | 0.8                                | 6.6                              | -4.3                              |

Source: Uttlesford Open Space, Sport Facility and Playing Strategy (2012)

- 4.67 Deficits in children's play spaces are present across the majority of the district, the largest of which are evident around the Saffron Walden and Stansted areas. Great Dunmow and Felsted are among the parishes in the closest proximity to GNCP and both register deficits of 5.0 and 3.7 ha respectively. Breakdown of the statistics for Great Dunmow highlight that the contrast within this ward is substantial, with an overprovision in the north of the parish and a more significant under provision in the south.





**Table 12: Larger parishes: Outdoor sports assessment**

| Parish             | Existing playing space (ha) | Playing space per 1,000 population | NPFA requirement for parish (ha) | Surplus / deficit for parish (ha) |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Clavering          | 2.8                         | 2.4                                | 1.8                              | 1.0                               |
| Dunmow             | 8.8                         | 1.3                                | 11.2                             | -2.4                              |
| Elsenham           | 3.5                         | 1.5                                | 3.8                              | -0.3                              |
| Felsted            | 2.5                         | 0.9                                | 4.5                              | -2.0                              |
| Great Chesterford  | 3.0                         | 2.1                                | 2.3                              | 0.7                               |
| Hatfield Broad Oak | 1.6                         | 1.4                                | 1.9                              | -0.3                              |
| Hatfield Heath     | 1.2                         | 0.7                                | 2.7                              | -1.5                              |
| Henham             | 1.4                         | 1.2                                | 1.9                              | -0.5                              |
| Little Hallingbury | 1.2                         | 0.9                                | 2.2                              | -1.0                              |
| Newport            | 3.6                         | 1.6                                | 3.5                              | 0.1                               |
| Saffron Walden     | 7.4                         | 0.5                                | 24.2                             | -16.8                             |
| Stansted           | 2.3                         | 0.4                                | 8.9                              | -6.6                              |
| Stebbing           | 3.9                         | 3.1                                | 2.1                              | 1.8                               |
| Takeley            | 6.6                         | 2.9                                | 3.7                              | 2.9                               |
| Thaxted            | 2.7                         | 1.1                                | 4.1                              | -1.4                              |

**Table 13: Urban wards: Outdoor sports assessment**

| Parish                | Existing playing space (ha) | Playing space per 1,000 population | NPFA requirement for parish (ha) | Surplus / deficit for parish (ha) |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Great Dunmow North    | 7.2                         | 2.8                                | 4.1                              | 3.1                               |
| Great Dunmow South    | 1.6                         | 0.4                                | 7.2                              | -5.6                              |
| Saffron Walden Audley | 0.4                         | 0.1                                | 7.4                              | -7.0                              |
| Saffron Walden Castle | 3.5                         | 0.7                                | 7.8                              | -4.3                              |
| Saffron Walden Shire  | 3.6                         | 0.7                                | 8.2                              | -4.6                              |
| Stansted North        | 2.1                         | 0.7                                | 5.1                              | -3.0                              |
| Stansted South        | 1.5                         | 0.5                                | 4.4                              | -2.9                              |

Source: Uttlesford Open Space, Sport Facility and Playing Strategy (2012)

- 4.68 Similarly to the children's play space assessment deficits are present in numerous parishes for outdoor sports space within the district; however this deficit does not include as many parishes as children's play space. Again the largest deficits are evident in Saffron Walden and Stansted, but deficiencies are also present in the parishes in closer proximity of GNCP. Great Dunmow and Felsted are lacking 2.4 and 2.0 ha of outdoor sports space respectively.



4.69 It is noteworthy that the above assessments do not cover the smaller parishes within Uttlesford, many of which have additional outdoor sports facilities.

### **Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment**

4.70 With relevance to the potential for expansion of GNCP, the landscape character area of the land west of the site is discussed below. The land falls within the Felsted Farmland Plateau landscape character area and the details of the area's sensitivity and key characteristics are outlined further in the following paragraphs.

### **Sensitivities to Change**

4.71 Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include many small woodlands, copses and hedgerow trees (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes and byways, which cross the landscape are sensitive to potential increased traffic flow, associated with new development. In association with this, the overall sense of tranquillity within the area is sensitive to change. Overall, this character area has low-to moderate sensitivity to change.

### **Landscape Strategy Option**

- Conserve - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.
- Enhance - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

### **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Ensure that new build is in keeping with landscape character;
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements;
- Maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across and along the valley;
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

### **Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character;
- Conserve and manage areas of semi-natural woodland as important landscape and nature conservation features;
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of hedges within the character area;
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

Source: Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (2006)

## **Colchester Local Plan**

### **Colchester Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2025)**

4.72 The Study takes account of:

- Association football;
- Athletics;
- Bowls;
- Cricket;



- Hockey;
- Rugby union;
- Tennis.

4.73 The purpose of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) is to look to address a range of fundamental challenges and assess how outdoor pitch and non-pitch facilities can be used to meet the needs of:

- A growing Colchester population, which is relatively prosperous and economically;
- stable whilst also catering for areas of higher deprivation which may have different requirements;
- The specific requirements of the developments within the Northern Gateway;
- Health partners in addressing the cost of physical inactivity and obesity levels;
- Increased demand for facilities given the projected increase in population;
- A growing and active 'grey market' which is time-rich, especially during the day.

**Table 14: Key challenges and issues**

| Sport                                       | Key challenges and issues   |
|---|---|
| Cricket England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a lack of indoor provision specifically for training;</li> <li>• The pitches are generally good quality;</li> <li>• There is good distribution across the Borough;</li> <li>• There is a significant amount of overplay on cricket wickets across the Borough per season.</li> </ul>  |
| The Football Association (FA)               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The natural turf pitches across the Borough are generally in good condition;</li> <li>• Some pitches across the Borough, due to their quality and levels of play, show some spare capacity;</li> <li>• The projected population growth suggests that there will be a demand for additional adult (3), youth (11) and mini soccer (10) pitches;</li> <li>• There are three sand dressed and two 3G artificial grass pitches. The two 3G pitches require re-surfacing;</li> <li>• On the basis of 395 teams playing competitive football in Colchester, Sport England's methodology indicates there is a recommended need for six full-size 3G pitches, of which there are currently two in the area.</li> </ul> |
| Rugby Union<br>Rugby Football Union         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are two clubs based in Colchester, one of which is at capacity and is working with CBC to affect a move to the Northern Gateway;</li> <li>• Rugby pitches are of a standard quality, although one of the sites has recorded overplay;</li> <li>• There is a need for an International Rugby Board (IRB) compliant pitch in the Borough which will best be supplied in the North to service the growing club.</li> </ul>  |
| Hockey<br>England Hockey                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is only one club in Colchester;</li> <li>• There are three sand dressed AGP's suitable for competitive hockey within Colchester, with only one being utilised solely for hockey;</li> <li>• In order for hockey to grow the pitches at The Garrison and at the University of Essex will need to be maintained and ensure that both have continued community use.</li> </ul>  |
| Tennis<br>Lawn Tennis<br>Association        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colchester has a significant number of tennis courts (60) identified within the Borough, 17 of which are located at privately owned sites;</li> <li>• The standard of courts is considered to be either good or standard with only ten being rated poor;</li> <li>• CBC owns a significant site at West End sports ground with nine grass and ten macadam good quality courts. It is currently operating at a deficit;</li> </ul>  |



|   |   |
|---|---|
| Bowls<br>Crown Green Bowls<br>Association | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 10 bowling greens in Colchester provided across ten sites;</li> <li>• All of the greens in Colchester are assessed as good quality;</li> <li>• Due to the requirement to for clubs to increase membership it suggests that some greens are not at capacity;</li> <li>• Clubs in the south analysis are assessed as at capacity.</li> </ul>                               |
| Athletics<br>England Athletics            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is one athletics track within Colchester which has a synthetic surface and it has been assessed as good;</li> <li>• Use is sometimes limited due to its location at The Garrison;</li> <li>• The northern part of the Borough has been identified as a priority for England Athletics in relation to the development of recreational running through marked runs.</li> </ul> |

Source: Colchester Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2025)

4.74 The key strategic priorities most likely to impact on the provision of open space and sports facilities in the north Essex from the Colchester Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan are outlined in the table below.

**Table 15: Key strategic priorities**

| Key strategic priorities   |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining the quality of football pitches (in particular) as the growth of football and demand for more play on pitches evolve</li> </ul>                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In general, providers need to maintain the generally good quality of pitches and address the few pitches which are considered to be below strict</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving the quality of the pitches, particularly on primary school sites, is important to ensuring improved access</li> </ul>                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resurfacing of the current two 3G football turf pitches is required</li> </ul>  |

Source: Colchester Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2025)

## Tendring Local Plan

### Tendring Open Space Strategy (2009)

4.75 The Tendring Open Spaces Strategy conducted a sites audit addressing issues including landscape character and green infrastructure context; Local Plan designation; biodiversity and amenity value; quality of access by pedestrian, cycle-way or bridleway access; disabled access; signage; facilities such as seating, bins, lighting, car-parks toilets; features such as historic features, water features, sculpture; playing pitches, sports facilities or children's play.

4.76 176 sites of more than 0.2ha in size were identified across the following eight typologies:

- Parks and Gardens;
- Amenity Greenspace;
- Natural and Semi-natural greenspace;
- Seafront/Green Corridors;
- Pitches/Outdoor sports facilities;
- Children and young people's provision;
- Allotments; and
- Cemeteries and Churchyards.



4.77 The Report then identifies a comprehensive list of recommendations across all typologies to mitigate the deficiencies and notes some next steps that can be taken to help deliver the strategy. The recommendations that are more relevant to GNCP are listed in the tables below.

**Table 16: Recommendations for parks and gardens (RPG)**

| Number | Recommendation  |
|--------|---|
| RPG1   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek additional provision in Mistley and Manningtree to mitigate for existing, and prospective quantitative deficiencies.</li> </ul>   |
| RPG2   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek additional provision in Dovercourt to mitigate for existing and prospective deficiencies in both quantity and accessibility</li> </ul>  |
| RPG3   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek enhanced provision in the south of Frinton by seeking to enhance existing facilities at the seafront.</li> </ul>  |
| RPG4   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek additional provision in north-west and north-east Clacton to mitigate for existing, and prospective accessibility deficiencies through prospective new development; seek enhancements to existing amenity greens, or creation of pocket parks.</li> </ul> |
| RPG5   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review role and identify enhancement plans as appropriate for Brighton Road Open Space, Haven Avenue Open Space and Knox Road Recreation Grounds.</li> </ul>   |
| RPG6   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with private owners to seek enhancements in quality and access to St Osyth Priory, Michael Stowe Hall Thorpe Hall and Mistley Park Place.</li> </ul>  |

**Table 17: Recommendations for amenity greenspace (RAG)**

| Number | Recommendation   |
|--------|--|
| RAG1   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek additional provision in Harwich and Dovercourt e.g. through prospective development, to mitigate for existing and prospective quantitative deficiencies.</li> </ul>  |
| RAG2   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek additional provision in Mistley and Manningtree to mitigate for existing, and prospective quantitative and accessibility deficiencies.</li> </ul>  |
| RAG3   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a review of disabled access with appropriate user-groups across the amenity green provision and identify priorities for improvement.</li> </ul>   |
| RAG4   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a review of signage and interpretation across the amenity green provision and identify priorities for improvement.</li> </ul>   |
| RAG5   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify where existing smaller sites &lt;0.2ha could mitigate for existing deficiencies in quantity and accessibility for larger Amenity Greens, Parks and Gardens and natural/semi-natural space.</li> </ul>  |
| RAG6   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate role of churchyards, especially those that are closed to burials, to provide an amenity green role in areas of deficiency.</li> </ul>   |
| RAG7   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review role and identify enhancement needs as appropriate for Very Poor quality sites namely, Lime/Highfield Avenue greenspace, Jaywick Community/Resource Centre, New Memorial Gardens, Walton; St Christopher's Way Car Park, Jaywick and West Road Open Space, Clacton with user groups and stakeholders.</li> </ul> |





**Table 18: Recommendations for natural and semi-natural greenspace**

| Number | Recommendation  |
|--------|---|
| RN1    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek additional publically-accessible provision in Harwich, in the southern part of Clacton, in Jaywick, and in Brightlingsea e.g. through prospective residential development, to mitigate for existing, and prospective quantitative deficiencies.</li> </ul>  |
| RN2    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek opportunities to work with private owners to seek enhancements in quality and access to privately owned sites, especially those with deficiencies of access in rural areas</li> </ul>   |
| RN3    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review quality of access and interpretation within publically-owned Natural and Semi-natural sites and identify priorities for enhancement.</li> </ul>   |
| RN4    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review role and identify enhancement needs as appropriate for Very Poor and Poor quality publically accessible sites namely: Station Road Woodlands, Brook Farm Woodlands, Holland Haven Country Park, Owls Flight/Lawford Dale, the Extension to the Hangings, Mistley Woodland and Martin's Farm Country Park</li> </ul> |
| RN5    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the Woodland Trust to create a significant area of new accessible woodland adjoining Elmstead Market to mitigate deficiencies in rural Tendring.</li> </ul>  |
| RN6    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek improvements to Public Right of Way (PRoW) network and bridleways in rural areas and the urban fringe to maximise amenity benefits of private sites even where these not accessible.</li> </ul>   |
| RN7    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify areas for 'naturalisation' within other typologies e.g. amenity greens, or boundary areas of sports pitches, to mitigate deficiencies where new sites cannot be created.</li> </ul>   |
| RN8    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek further opportunities to involve local communities and Members in Community Biodiversity Schemes in public open space.</li> </ul>   |
| RN9    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek closer working on greenspace between Tendring District Council Departments, and Mental Health Trusts.</li> </ul>  |
| RN10   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all major sites have an active Management Plan in place.</li> </ul>   |

**Table 19: Recommendations for playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities (SP)**

| Number                      | Recommendation  |
|-----------------------------|---|
| SP1 Adult football pitches  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phased refurbishment programme of changing facilities at all existing sites, with priority given to those serving multiple pitches.</li> </ul>   |
| SP2 Junior football pitches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convert existing surplus adult pitches into junior pitches.</li> <li>Negotiate community access to six junior pitches at schools in the Clacton area.</li> <li>One new junior pitch at Low Road Recreation Ground.</li> <li>One new junior pitch at Lawford Recreation Ground.</li> <li>Phased refurbishment programme of changing facilities at all existing sites, with priority given to those serving multiple pitches.</li> </ul> |
| SP3 Mini-soccer pitches     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four new mini-soccer pitches at Vista Road Recreation Ground.</li> <li>Negotiate community access to four mini-soccer pitches at schools in the Clacton area.</li> <li>Negotiate community access to three mini-soccer pitches at schools in the Manningtree/Mistley area.</li> <li>Phased refurbishment programme of changing facilities at all existing sites, with priority given to those serving multiple pitches.</li> </ul>     |
| SP4 Cricket pitches         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phased refurbishment programme of changing facilities at all existing sites.</li> </ul>  |
| SP5 Rugby pitches           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phased refurbishment programme of changing facilities at all existing sites.</li> </ul>  |



|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| SP6 Hockey pitches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phased refurbishment programme of changing facilities at all existing sites.</li> </ul>   |
| SP7 Tennis courts  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New courts at Lawford Recreation Ground.</li> <li>• New courts at Great Bentley Primary School.</li> <li>• New courts at Ardleigh Recreation Ground.</li> <li>• Phased refurbishment programme of changing facilities at all existing sites, with priority given to those serving multiple courts.</li> </ul> |
| SP8 Bowling Greens | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New green in Clacton (subject to the formation of a local club to manage the facility).</li> <li>• Phased refurbishment programme of changing provision and other qualitative deficiencies at all existing facilities.</li> </ul>   |
| SP9 Golf courses   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No action required</li> </ul>   |
| PP10 MUGAs         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 new MUGA in Frinton Park.</li> <li>• 1 new MUGA at Lawford Recreation Ground.</li> <li>• 1 new MUGA at Colne Community School.</li> <li>• 1 new MUGA at Great Bentley Primary School.</li> </ul>  |

**Table 20: Recommendations for children and young people's provision**

| Number | Recommendation  |
|--------|---|
| RCYP1  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek additional provision in line with the recommendations of Tendring's Play Area and Sports Pitch Needs assessment currently provision of 5 LEAPs, 6 LAPs, a Play area for under 5's at Hazel Close, Thorrington.</li> </ul>   |
| RYCP2  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek additional provision in line with the proposed standards in areas of proposed growth.</li> </ul>  |
| RCYP3  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek improvements to sites identified in the Play Area and Sports Pitch Needs Assessment, namely 23 No sites improved to LEAP or NEAP standards; 7 No. extended or refurbished; 2 No. over 12's facilities added; 1 No under 5's area to be created; 7 No. needing fencing or signage; 19 are of good quality and their quality is to be maintained; 2 No. should be decommissioned or have play equipment removed.</li> </ul> |
| RCYP4  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priority sites where natural play elements can be incorporated within planned new or enhanced facilities.</li> </ul>  |

Source: Tendring Open Spaces Strategy (2009)

## Hatfield Forest

4.78 Hatfield Forest is a designated as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is located in Uttlesford, directly south of Takeley and approximately 18.5km west of GNCP. In recent years, Hatfield Forest has experienced deterioration in the quality of the Forest due to high levels of visitors, particularly in winter months when adverse weather exacerbates the impact of excessive tourist numbers. Poor weather, predominantly rain, erodes the footpaths and increased footfall in the Forest during these poor weather months has a significant impact.

4.79 Further to the above current conditions, there is intense development pressure in the area with a significant number of dwellings proposed for the North Essex area. A workshop was held entitled 'Shaping the Future of Hatfield Forest' at which the issue of future development and the impact on the forest was discussed. It was concluded that development should be matched with increased significant areas of green space and green infrastructure for people and nature. Without it the pressure on the Forest will only increase. There is a desire from the National Trust to be able to engage with planning and strategies at all the relevant levels from County to Neighbourhood Plans in order to find a solution to the issue of further deterioration of Hatfield forest.



- 4.80 Arising from this is the potential opportunity to develop the facilities at GNCP to target a winter tourism market at the benefit of both GNCP and Hatfield Forest. The 'Priority Actions to tackle the muddy path challenge' report following on from the workshop highlighted the importance of additional provision of open accessible spaces to provide alternative tourism attractions and reduce the number of visitors to Hatfield Forest during the poor weather winter months. Indoor provisions located at GNCP have the potential to provide the alternative venue and in doing so generate additional revenue for GNCP by engaging with the off season market currently lacking on the site and assisting in the recuperation of Hatfield Forest producing wider environmental benefits.

Source: Shaping the Future of Hatfield Forest Workshop (2016)

### **Current Issues (from the GNCP Strategic Review Workshop)**

- 4.81 Site capacity presents difficulties within the site. The site currently has a maximum capacity of 150,000 visitors per annum and approximately 2,000 per day which, on busy days in the peak season, is almost reached. The seasonal nature of the GNCP is exacerbated by the fact that the majority of the site is open, with few features to provide shielding from poor weather. With the influx of visitors in the peak months, capacity issues must be addressed before any additional or improved destination park measures are implemented to ensure this issue would not be intensified.
- 4.82 There are 180 hard standing car parking spaces and an overflow car park on site. The perception is that the use of the overflow car park is damaging to the experience of the visitors and is only a viable parking location in dry weather. The overflow car park is located on a grass surface and so becomes unreliable in wet weather. Traffic implications associated with the barriers at the entrance of GNCP are also a factor, with instances of queues backed onto the highway.
- 4.83 Questions were raised over the suitability of the existing building on the site as well as a lack of footpaths across GNCP. On site infrastructure such as this could stand to be improved in order to better meet the needs of visitors, particularly through the peak season. Furthermore, toilet facilities are identified as lacking with not enough available for public use in peak times.
- 4.84 As mentioned as a common thread through a majority of the issues, seasonality affects visitors to the destination park. Peak seasons at GNCP attract large numbers of visitors to the park to engage in outdoor activities but currently weather is the major determining factor for visitor, dictating tourist numbers. There is identified potential to increase visitor numbers through the winter months where weather is poor. The open landscape present on the site with meadows and mature hedgerows with very little established woodland reflects the seasonality of the visitor numbers as there is a lack of protection from poor weather.
- 4.85 Visitors to the park are also selective of the facilities and locations within the site they utilise, with the concentration of tourists around the northern section of the site. The areas to the south do not experience such high volumes of pedestrian traffic; however this in itself forms part of the attraction for the users who do venture to the open spaces. Tranquillity was seen as a benefit for some users who visit the destination park and so maintaining this varying concentration of visitors across areas of the park could be a positive feature to retain in the GNCP when looking to the future.
- 4.86 Within the workshop, issues were raised pertaining to the potential for circa 33,000 additional residents in Braintree as a result of the implementation of the Braintree Local Plan. With regard to the above issues, increased visitor presence is likely to intensify some of the issues in the absence of an effective masterplan to reduce the impact of the quantum of development in the District.



- 4.87 Customer experience was another issue raised, with important questions surrounding visitor habits and satisfaction. Section 3 of this report is concerned with analysing data from stakeholders and contains information from the GNCP Survey (ECC, 2017) in which these questions are addressed and discussed in more detail.
- 4.88 Until recently, marketing for the destination park had been limited and so the majority of visitors to the park had been focused to the Braintree area. This year, increased support from BDC communications team has had positive results for marketing the site.
- 4.89 Resources for the site are also limited, not just in marketing, but also staffing numbers and funding. On peak days, increased staff numbers are required to facilitate a positive experience for visitors, which can prove difficult. Capital funds are also limited in respect of both investment and maintenance budgets which will have to be taken into account at the master planning stage.

DRAFT



## 5. Market Information

### Visitor trends

5.1 Tourism in Essex is an important industry with large numbers of visits to attractions across the County. The data below is taken from the Visit Essex report entitled the 'Economic Impact of Tourism' published in 2015. It demonstrates the high number of trips undertaken by tourists in the County and the substantial resulting revenue stream.

**Table 21: Trips and spend in rural areas in Essex**

|                    | Trips      | Spend        |
|--------------------|------------|--------------|
| Countryside visits | 12,017,000 | £381,970,000 |

Source: Visit Essex Economic Impact of Tourism Report (2015)

5.2 In 2009 Natural England, Defra and the Forestry Commission commissioned TNS to undertake the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey for the first time. It has since been conducted annually and the following section summarises the results from the report published in 2015. The information collected enables data users to:

- Understand how people use, enjoy and are motivated to protect the natural environment;
- Monitor changes in use of the natural environment over time, at a range of different spatial scales and for key groups within the population;
- Inform on-the-ground initiatives to help them link more closely to people's needs;
- Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of related policy and initiatives;
- Measure the impact of and inform policy relating to the natural environment.

5.3 The table below is taken from the MENE survey results and outlines the estimated visit numbers which are indicative of demand for visitor attractions across the nation.

**Table 22: Visit estimates by specific place visited**

|   | 12 month visit estimate '000s visits     |  |  |  | Change<br>Year 1 – year 4 |
|---|--|--|--|--|---------------------------|
|   | Year 1<br>March 2009 to<br>February 2010 | Year 2<br>March 2010 to<br>February 2011 | Year 3<br>March 2011 to<br>February 2012 | Year 4<br>March 2012 to<br>February 2013 |                           |
| Playing field<br>or other<br>recreation<br>area | 195,411                                  | 190,962                                  | 228,865                                  | 206,731                                  | 11,320 (5.79%)            |
| Children's<br>playground                        | 82,157                                   | 75,804                                   | 80,171                                   | 85,516                                   | 3,359 (4.09%)             |
| Country Park                                    | 198,630                                  | 176,258                                  | 196,595                                  | 204,311                                  | 5,681 (2.86%)             |





|                              |         |         |         |         |                 |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| Path, cycleway or bridleways | 369,187 | 359,534 | 430,117 | 448,256 | 79,069 (21.42%) |
| River, lake or canal         | 253,373 | 231,907 | 261,436 | 251,803 | -1,570 (-0.62%) |
| Woodland or forest           | 316,825 | 325,554 | 358,314 | 356,575 | 39,750 (12.55%) |

- 5.4 Paths, cycleway and bridleways have seen the largest national increase in visits between year 1 and year 4 of the surveys at 21.42%, 8.87% above the next highest increase of 12.55% evident for woodland and forest areas. Only rivers, lakes and canals registered a fall in visitor numbers over this time period (-0.62%). Country Parks registered an increase in visitor numbers of 2.86% which equates to some 5,681 additional visitors over the 4 year time period.

Source: Natural England Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey (2015)

- 5.5 Visitor numbers to GNCP have experienced a decline in the months of April and August 2017 when compared with the previous year. A significant reduction of 2,921 visitors in April was eclipsed by a drop of 8,737 visitors in August. However, the decrease in visitor numbers for August can in part be accredited to an anomalous year in 2015-16 where visitor numbers in August were considerably higher than trends from previous years would have predicted. The recorded numbers for 2017 are still comparatively low when assessed against the trend as the years of 2013-14 and 2014-15 where numbers were in decline from 32,839 to 26,254 respectively. Visitor numbers in April follow a clearer trend with an increase in 2013-14 to 2014-15 and then a decline every year from 2014-15 to 2017.
- 5.6 All other months in 2017 have seen an increase in visitor numbers ranging from the highest increase in July of 5,586 to the lowest increase of 2 visitors. May and June have increased steadily since 2013-14 and July has seen increase since 2014-15 following a decrease between the years of 2013-14 and 2014-15. These figures highlight trends for a shift in the last year from a heavy reliance on visitor numbers in August towards a more evenly spread attendance throughout the year.
- 5.7 Data from 2015-16 for the remaining months show a stagnation of visitor numbers during the winter months, with a small decrease in numbers in November, very little variance in December when compared with 2013-14 figures despite a low visitor attendance in 2014-15 and a decrease in January on the previous year of 1,772. These trends demonstrate that visitor numbers are consistently lower through the low season as expected and indicate that there would need to be a substantial change to the provisions on site to stimulate growths in the winter months.

Source: Country Parks Income and Visitor Numbers, ECC and BDC data

**Table 23: Visitor composition**

|                  | Children only | Adults only | 1 Adult, 1 Child | 2 Adults, 1 Child | 1 Adult, 2 Children | 1 Adult, 3-4 Children | 2 Adults, 2 Children | 2 Adults, 3-4 Children | Groups |
|------------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------|
| Number of people | 1             | 35          | 14               | 49                | 20                  | 5                     | 87                   | 24                     | 27     |

- 5.8 Market information from the GNCP Survey indicates that the predominant age group visiting the site are aged between 35 and 44 years old (41% of visitors), likely with young families. Statistics from the same source confirm this statement, demonstrating that of all respondents to the survey, 65% comprised at least 1 adult and 1-2 children and 11% comprised at least 1 adult and 3-4 children. 76% of visitors were at least 1 adult accompanying at least 1



child with just 24% of visitors being adults only, children only or groups. This evidence identifies families as the vast majority of visitors to the park and so options for expanding the range of activities available should predominantly be focused with meeting the needs of families.

Source: GNCP Survey 2017

**Table 24: Length of stay**

| Month  | Up to 30 mins | Up to 1 hour | Up to 2 hours | Up to 3 hours | Over 3 hours  | Total  |
|--------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| Apr-16 | 136 (2.4%)    | 683 (12.2%)  | 2,087 (37.2%) | 1,557 (27.7%) | 1,155 (20.6%) | 5,618  |
| May-16 | 129 (2.3%)    | 733 (12.9%)  | 1,944 (34.1%) | 1,538 (27.0%) | 1,350 (23.7%) | 5,694  |
| Jun-16 | 155 (3.8%)    | 553 (13.4%)  | 1,434 (34.8%) | 1,079 (26.2%) | 896 (21.8%)   | 4,117  |
| Jul-16 | 185 (2.7%)    | 714 (10.4%)  | 2,241 (32.7%) | 1,754 (25.6%) | 1,956 (28.6%) | 6,850  |
| Aug-16 | 150 (1.2%)    | 782 (6.1%)   | 3,048 (24.0%) | 3,278 (25.8%) | 5,460 (42.9%) | 12,718 |
| Sep-16 | 112 (2.5%)    | 612 (13.6%)  | 1,577 (34.9%) | 1,210 (26.8%) | 1,003 (22.2%) | 4,514  |
| Oct-16 | 105 (2.3%)    | 659 (14.2%)  | 1,873 (40.3%) | 1,244 (26.8%) | 768 (16.5%)   | 4,649  |
| Nov-16 | -             | -            | -             | -             | -             | -      |
| Dec-16 | -             | -            | -             | -             | -             | -      |
| Jan-17 | -             | -            | -             | -             | -             | -      |
| Feb-17 | -             | -            | -             | -             | -             | -      |
| Mar-17 | -             | -            | -             | -             | -             | -      |

Source: Country Parks Parking Income and Visitor Numbers, ECC and BDC data

5.9 Data collected on the length of stay for visitors highlights the fact that for the majority of the year, most people visit the park for up to 2 hours. There is a noteworthy trend in the percentage of visitors who stay for over 3 hours, as demonstrated in the table above in the increase in percentage for this length of stay into the peak months with August registering the highest percentage for this duration. This reinforces much of the other evidence around the peak season and how usage of the park is much lower for the rest of the year. A shift in duration of stay is noticeable in the above table. In the off season, people stay in the park for a reduced amount of time but as the peak season approaches the percentage of visitors who stay longer increases. Indications in these figures highlight a desire to stay in the park for longer but hint that exposure to the weather is an important factor.

## Additional facilities

5.10 Several options for additional activities arose from discussions at the workshop to supplement the suite of activities existing on the site. As discussed above, there is the potential to include indoor activities to encourage more visitors in the low season, possibly in the form of a bootcamp. The GNCP Survey discusses the habits of visitors when on the site and states that only 16% of activities engaged in by tourists are not outdoors. This large majority demonstrates that although there is potential to boost visitor numbers through the winter by increasing indoor activities, the demand for outdoor pursuits needs to be accommodated simultaneously to account for the current visitor trends eager to engage in outdoor activities. Further outdoor activities identified from the respondents include:

- Archery
- Tree climbing



- Geo-cache
- Running (park run exists already but could be enhanced)
- Boating lake
- Pitch and putt golf
- Cycle hire
- BMX ramp track
- Mountain bike track

5.11 Currently the only provision for food and refreshments on the site is in a café located in the Discovery Centre. The centre is small and cannot provide for all visitors on the site as well as having limited seating available outside for the peak summer months. Given that data from the GNCP Survey puts 'having a picnic' as the third most popular activity for visitors to the park with 11% of visitors partaking, there is a market for the provision of competitively priced and convenient food and refreshment services. In order to improve this aspect of the park, the café should remain open throughout regular visiting times and the provision of additional food and refreshment facilities should be provided on a smaller scale located nearby to key play facilities. Further outdoor seating areas should be provided outside the café and any additional facilities to encourage their use in the summer months when visitor numbers peak.

Source: The GNCP Survey 2017

5.12 GNCP also acts as a gateway park to other open space and the wider countryside. A bridleway to the Flitch Way allows cycle and horse riding access to about 15 miles of safe traffic free pathway through the North Essex countryside. The Flitch Way runs directly into the heart of Braintree and provides an alternative car-free route to the park.

5.13 The ECC team of staff are also responsible for the management of the Flitch Way and Blackwater Trail. Volunteers are used across the park. The Flitch Way has an established group of volunteers who undertake the vast majority of maintenance to the route with the exception of the mechanical flailing of the verges and hedgerows. GNCP is run in partnership between BDC and ECC. The partnership represents a merger between GNCP and Flitch Way Country Park and Associated Woodlands. There is the potential opportunity to link the teams for both GNCP and Flitch Way further to expand current operations, encourage sustainable transport to both sites and create a wider strategic network of open, publicly accessible spaces within Braintree District.

Source: GNCP, ECC data and GNCP Survey 2017

## Demographics

5.14 Discussions of the data from the GNCP Survey in the stakeholder analysis section of this report highlighted that the customer base for GNCP extends beyond the administrative boundaries of Braintree District. Its role as a destination park attracts tourists from across the region. Demographics at the strategic level are integral to determining the customer base and market for the site.

**Table 25: Population growth across Braintree, Colchester and Tendring**

|   | Braintree     | Colchester    | Tendring      | Total         |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Population at 2013                          | 150,391       | 179,158       | 141,599       | 471,148       |
| Approximate population by 2032 (% increase) | 172,640 (15%) | 210,280 (17%) | 161,891 (14%) | 544,811 (16%) |



Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)

- 5.15 Substantial population growth is projected within Braintree, Colchester and Tendring which is likely to greatly increase the strain on the current provision of facilities and activities on the site, as well as providing a significant opportunity to increase the capacity and range of attractions on the site to engage the evolving tourism market. Braintree district itself is anticipated to experience a growth in population of 22,249.

**Table 26: Projected Growth Projections**

|  | Braintree | Colchester | Tendring | Total   |
|--|-----------|------------|----------|---------|
| Estimated Annual Population Growth 2013-2037 | 1,171     | 1,638      | 1,068    | 3,877   |
| Total Population at 2013 (estimate)          | 150,391   | 179,158    | 141,599  | 471,148 |
| Estimated Population at 2032                 | 172,640   | 210,280    | 161,891  | 544,811 |
| Percentage Increase 2013-2032                | 15%       | 17%        | 14%      | 16%     |
| Estimated population at 2037                 | 178,495   | 218,470    | 167,231  | 564,196 |
| Percentage Increase 2013-2037                | 19%       | 22%        | 18%      | 20%     |

Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)

- 5.16 Projected figures for population growth within the same scope are higher as the growth is predicted to continue into 2037. The population is projected to increase by 1,171 people every year until 2037 and over the time period of 2013-2037, is expected to grow by a total of 28,104.

Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)

- 5.17 The growing urban area of Braintree borders the park. Approximately 400,000 people live within 20 miles of the park. Of these, 43% (totalling 172,000) are family groups which form the majority of the visitor base for the park as illustrated in the statistics in visitor trends tables above.
- 5.18 GNCP attracts visitors from beyond the administrative boundaries of Essex such as Greater London, Suffolk and Hertfordshire which are not accounted for in the above statistics.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020

**Table 27: Household projections 2013-2037 (DCLG 2014)**

|           | Household types               | Braintree | Chelmsford | Colchester | Three districts |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| 2013      | One male                      | 7,637     | 8,936      | 9,818      | 26,391          |
|           | One female                    | 9,397     | 10,621     | 11,730     | 31,748          |
|           | Couple – no others            | 18,189    | 20,800     | 20,388     | 59,377          |
|           | Couple – other adults (no DC) | 4,929     | 5,834      | 5,125      | 15,888          |
|           | H'hold with 1 DC              | 8,327     | 8,810      | 9,809      | 26,946          |
|           | H'hold with 2 DC              | 7,694     | 8,700      | 8,473      | 24,867          |
|           | H'hold with 3 DC              | 2,865     | 3,005      | 3,036      | 8,906           |
|           | Other                         | 3,330     | 4,259      | 5,213      | 12,802          |
|           | Total                         | 62,368    | 70,964     | 73,593     | 206,925         |
| 2037      | One male                      | 10,996    | 12,544     | 14,066     | 37,606          |
|           | One female                    | 11,304    | 11,289     | 13,946     | 36,539          |
|           | Couple – no others            | 22,546    | 25,271     | 23,359     | 71,176          |
|           | Couple – other adults (no DC) | 5,780     | 7,006      | 5,977      | 18,763          |
|           | H'hold with 1 DC              | 10,442    | 11,755     | 14,984     | 37,181          |
|           | H'hold with 2 DC              | 7,973     | 9,810      | 10,545     | 28,328          |
|           | H'hold with 3 DC              | 2,664     | 2,712      | 2,660      | 8,036           |
|           | Other                         | 5,202     | 6,315      | 7,988      | 19,505          |
|           | Total                         | 76,907    | 86,703     | 93,525     | 257,135         |
| 2013-2037 | One male                      | 3,359     | 3,608      | 4,248      | 11,215          |
|           | One female                    | 1,907     | 668        | 2,216      | 4,791           |





|  |                               |        |        |        |        |
|--|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|  | Couple – no others            | 4,357  | 4,471  | 2,971  | 11,799 |
|  | Couple – other adults (no DC) | 851    | 1,172  | 852    | 2,875  |
|  | H'hold with 1 DC              | 2,115  | 2,945  | 5,175  | 10,235 |
|  | H'hold with 2 DC              | 279    | 1,110  | 2,072  | 3,461  |
|  | H'hold with 3 DC              | -201   | -293   | -376   | -870   |
|  | Other                         | 1,872  | 2,056  | 2,775  | 6,703  |
|  | Total                         | 14,539 | 15,739 | 19,932 | 50,210 |

Note: DC: Dependent Children

Source: BDC, Chelmsford City Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council - Objectively Assessed Housing Need Study November 2016 update (Peter Brett Associates)



## North Essex Infrastructure

### Road Infrastructure

**Figure 6: Strategic Road Network**



Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)

**For further  
information**

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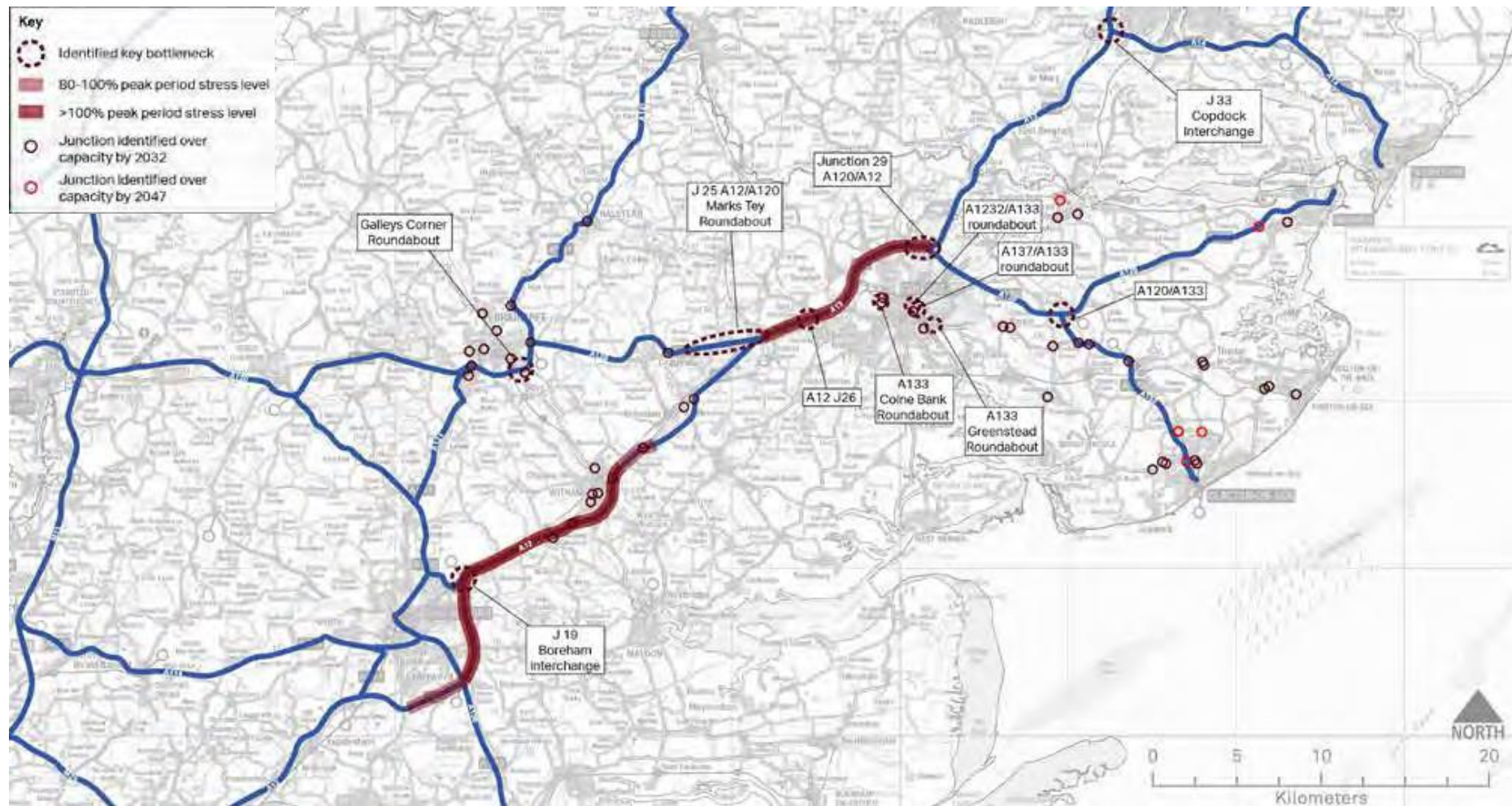
- 5.19 The North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium Part 1 (June 2016) highlights road infrastructure and emphasises the A12 and A120 as routes of high strategic importance for numerous reasons over and above the tourism. For the purposes of serving GNCP, the strategic routes highlighted in the figure above are the predominant roads feeding the site. It depicts the road network and provides information on the width of the roads and therefore capacity for the additional dwellings and potentially expanding customer base for the GNCP.
- 5.20 The majority of the road network around North Essex comprises dual carriageways which have limited capacity and struggle to serve the traffic. This has impacts on visitors to the park, particularly in peak summer months when traffic levels are high, resulting in traffic queues and slow movement across the north of the county. A small stretch of the A12 between Colchester and Marks Tey is a three lane highway, as well as 2 more small sections of the A12 near Chelmsford. The M11 is three lanes wide in both directions all the way from the M25 junction to the Bishop's Stortford junction.
- 5.21 East-west travel times between Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester are currently impacted by high levels of traffic congestion particularly on the A120 and A130. The A12 also experiences levels of driver delay particular around Chelmsford and south towards the M25.
- 5.22 Traffic flows on the A12 range between 60,000 and 90,000 vehicles per day (two-way), depending on the location, HGVs account for between 10-15% of the total flow. When compared to roads within the East of England, the A12 is amongst the most heavily trafficked.
- 5.23 The A120 carries less traffic with up to 30,000 vehicles per day on some sections, and a large proportion of the HGVs using this route travel towards Harwich.
- 5.24 The sections of carriageway around Chelmsford (from junction 15), around Witham (between junction 23 and Junction 25), Marks Tey (Junction 26) and north of Colchester (junctions 29) currently experience up to and beyond 100% peak period stress levels i.e. traffic volumes are greater than the theoretical capacity of the road, this results in at times lengthy traffic queueing.
- 5.25 Historically, investment in this route has not kept pace with growing demand and all sections of road are currently operating at, or near, capacity. Journeys can therefore be unpredictable, especially at peak times, and incidents can lead to serious disruption (A12/A120). The A12, in its current state, is felt to inhibit growth in the region, both due to the issues of congestion and because of journey unreliability, which inhibits business growth in the area.
- 5.26 It is likely that the lack of three lanes in either direction along sections of the A12 identified has a fundamental effect on traffic 'stress'.
- 5.27 ECC identify Junctions 19 and 29 in particular as being current 'bottleneck' links within the local road network, whilst they identify that the route between the A12 and the A131/A120 will see a significant increase in traffic over the next 20 years because of the planned growth in north-east Chelmsford.

Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)





**Figure 7: Existing Road Constraints**



Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)



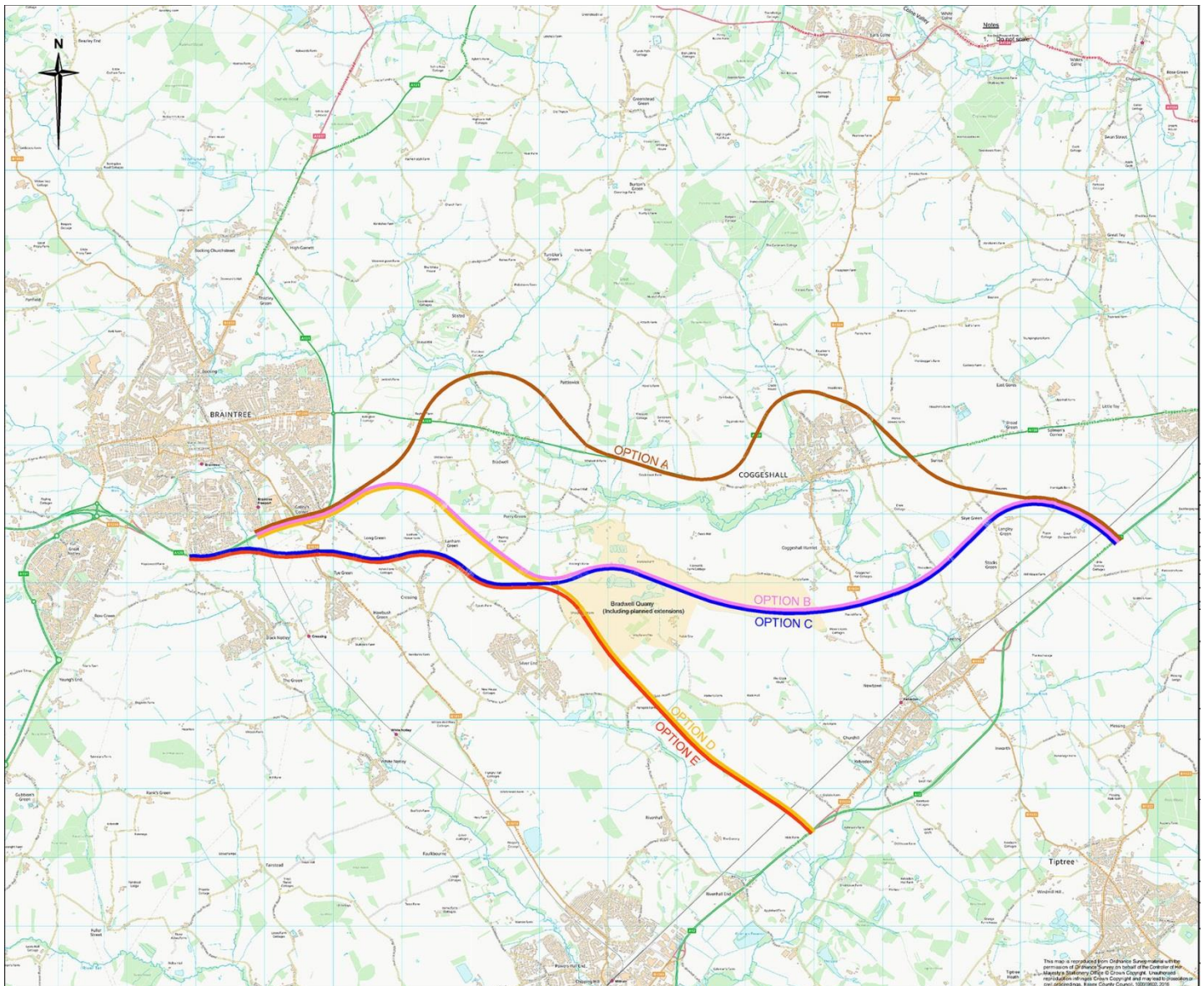
- 5.28 Jacobs and ECC have provided traffic modelling support for Braintree's Local Plan Options Assessment in respect of their emerging Local Plan proposals. Eleven separate development scenarios were tested by Jacobs with varying development thresholds (jobs and housing), of which the West of Braintree and Marks Tey (north of the A12 only) were tested. The report concluded that by 2032 it is likely that development will put the current road network under considerable pressure with many of the key junctions identified failing to provide enough capacity. It is likely that a number of alterations will be required at these junctions, along with new infrastructure and greater provision of alternative methods of transport to encourage a modal shift.
- 5.29 Jacobs have undertaken a similar role for Tendring District Council (TDC). The document, based on agreed future development scenarios (including future NTS background growth, sites with planning and identified future development sites) identifies a number of junctions across the district that will become over capacity in future year scenarios 2032 and 2047. This modelling includes 6,000 homes on the East Colchester site (full development scenario by 2047).
- 5.30 For Colchester's Local Plan Modelling Support, a SATURN model was developed in 2009 with a base year of 2007 on the AM and PM peaks. For the purposes of the 2015 Local Plan modelling the forecast year has been updated to 2032 encapsulating all identified development. The junction delay comparisons for the most affected peak period (AM) show that there is increased delay at a number of junctions when compared against the 'current allocated development' scenario.
- 5.31 As the figure above demonstrates, within Braintree there are a number of junctions that are predicted to be over capacity by 2032, as well as a key identified bottleneck located at Galleys Corner roundabout. There are also numerous identified key bottlenecks located around Colchester and Tendring as well as a high concentration of junctions predicted to be over capacity by 2032.
- 5.32 Between the urban area of Chelmsford and past Witham, the road is mainly dual carriageway in nature with the exception of a 6km section of 3 lanes in both directions. This entire section is identified as currently subject to over 100% peak period stress level along with identified traffic issues at Junction 19, Boreham interchange. The latter is subject to planned upgrades in concordance with the A130 bypass proposals, whilst the remaining duelled sections of the A12 are proposed to be widened to a 3 lane carriageway in both ways.
- 5.33 The historic design of the A12 between for example Witham and Marks Tey include a number of sub-standard junctions and slip roads. In the same area, properties with direct frontage access exist. Peak period stress levels of between 80-100% currently occur on the A12 north of Witham and Junction 25, Marks Tey roundabout. Currently a dual carriageway, this section of the A12 is planned to be widened to 3 lane carriageway in both directions with a potential new junction between the A120 realignment and the A12 (one of several options under consideration by ECC).
- 5.34 Within the Colchester area, the A12 is a three-lane carriageway in both directions from Junction 25-Junction 26, where it then downgrades again to a dual carriageway. In terms of traffic issues, the entire section is currently subject to over 100% peak period stress levels, whilst Junctions 26 and 29 were identified as key bottlenecks. Proposed upgrades on this section are proposed at Junction 26 along with the widening of the dual carriageway section to a three-lane carriageway in both directions.
- 5.35 In addition, the totality of the previously described sections of the A12 are proposed to receive technological Smart M-Way upgrades including CCTV monitoring and improved variable message signing to improve traffic movement.
- 5.36 The western section of the A120 links the M11 at Junction 8 with the A12 at Junction 25 (Marks Tey), whilst the eastern section links the A12 at junction 29 in Colchester with Harwich (town and Port). The A120 is 73km in length, along its route the conditions of the road vary considerably in terms of road width, quality of surface and traffic conditions.





- 5.37 Between J8 of the M11 (Stansted Airport) and the A131/A120/Coggeshall Road junction (Marsh Farm), the A120 forms a 29km dual carriageway with high quality well maintained surfaces and in many cases grade separated junctions and limited direct points of access to the route. Traffic on this section of the road is free-flowing in most cases, with congestion currently identified around Braintree, at Galleys Corner Roundabout, the junction between the A120 and the A131 along with Marks Farm roundabout highlighted by the Jacobs modelling as over capacity by 2032 with the introduction of development.
- 5.38 From Marks Farm roundabout to J25 of the A12, the A120 is a single carriageway road with a number of direct accesses fronting the route. Traffic issues are identified (Large traffic queues forming at peak times) on large sections on this route, namely between the junction with the A12 and Broad Green. In addition, the A120/B1024 junction was identified by Jacobs within the Local Plan modelling as over capacity by 2032. ECC is leading a project to investigate the expansion of the A120, including the possibility of a new offline duelled section of the A120 between Marsh Farm and the A12 close to Marks Tey.
- 5.39 Finally, a section of the A120 links the A12 at junction 29 (North of Colchester) with Harwich. The section of road, located mainly within the administrative boundary of Tendring, is dual carriageway, well-maintained and carrying mainly free-flowing traffic, with the exception of its junction with the A133, which currently experiences congestion. Past this junction, the dual carriageway quickly downgrades to a single carriageway and remains this way until Harwich. This last section, similar to the section between Braintree and Marks Tey, is dominated by direct points of accesses, along with several mini roundabouts limiting free flow.
- 5.40 A £50m upgrade plan for this section of the A120 was identified in Tendring's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) dated of 2013, whilst investments on the entire length of the A120 were also identified in Essex Economic Growth Strategy report dated of 2012.
- Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)
- 5.41 Public consultation is currently underway for the proposed new routes of the A120 strategic road. The figure below demonstrates the options being discussed, all of which aim to increase flows to and from the A12 and alleviate congestion on the Galleys Corner roundabout and Marks Tey roundabout. Both of these locations are highlighted above as areas of significant congestion.

**Figure 8: A120 new route options**



Source: ECC A120 Consultation website <http://a120essex.co.uk/>



## Rail Infrastructure

5.42 The frequencies on the main routes through Essex are compared below:

- The Great Eastern Main Line (GEML) between Norwich and London Liverpool Street operates a high capacity peak hour service, with 10 trains per hour (either direction) between Colchester and London. The operation of the line is focused on the reliable and punctual operation of trains into and out of London Liverpool Street. The mixture of intercity, semi-fast outer suburban and freight trains on a two track mainline compromises its capacity to perform as it has many requirements to perform. This is exacerbated by the age of the rolling stock.
- The Braintree (Flitch Line) operates 1 service per hour (either direction) between London, a 12-car train between London and Colchester splits at Witham;
- A diesel powered 1 train per hour (either direction) shuttle route operates between Marks Tey and Sudbury (Gainsborough Line);
- The Sunshine Coast line operates up to 4 trains per hour (peak time – either direction) between Colchester and Clacton, and up to 2 trains per hour (peak time – either direction) Walton-on-the-Naze.

5.43 There are apparent gaps in the network in terms of connectivity and frequencies, with understandably a clear bias towards movement of passengers on the GEML, whilst the branch lines operate low frequency, low capacity services.

5.44 In terms of rail connectivity, there is a clear gap in the network between Braintree and Stansted and cross regional movements in north Essex are therefore very limited, impacting on visitors travelling to GNCP by rail.

5.45 Current average speeds on the GEML and its branches are as follows:

- 40-75mph between London Liverpool Street and Bow Junction,
- 80-105mph on the rest of the GEML,
- 40-75mph on both the Braintree and the Sudbury sublines.
- The lower speeds are of over capacity on the rail line and signalling constraints.

5.46 The GEML operates some of the oldest train rolling stock (average age is 25 years) and is one of the slowest main lines in the UK. The current public performance measure for Greater Anglia intercity services highlights the relative poor performance with only 84% of trains arriving at their final destination within ten minutes of the advertised time against a target of 93%. This reflects the issues associated with operating older carriages and infrastructure, which is in need of investment. The Rail Executives East Anglia Prospectus 2015 identifies the need for upgraded rolling stock; this is unlikely to consist of new trains and increased capacity, rather improved and refurbished existing rolling stock.

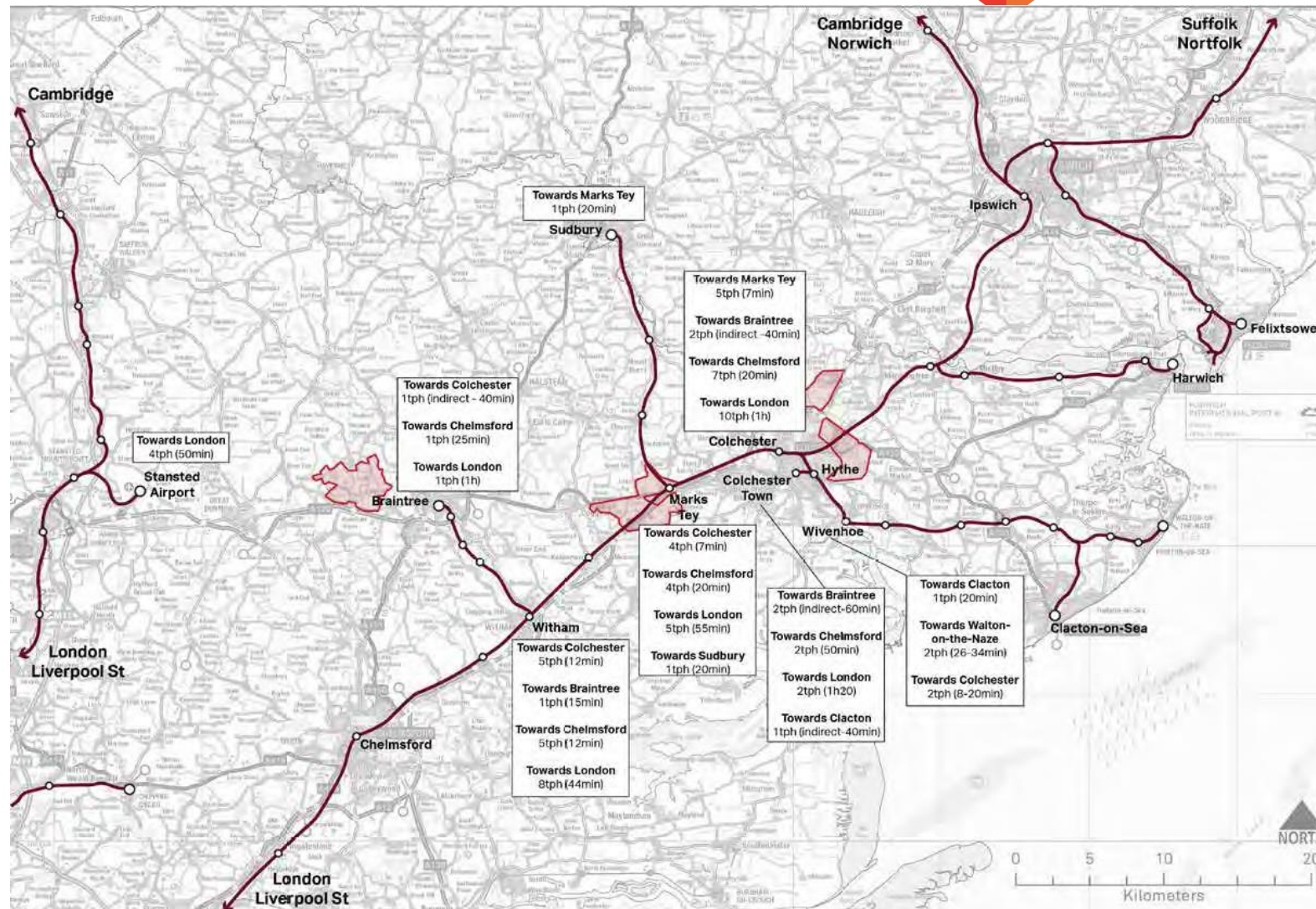
5.47 Within the DfT's franchising plans it has committed to deliver "Norwich in 90" – 90 minute services between London Liverpool Street and Norwich within the period 2015-2109 defined as CP5. This will help to provide a faster route between the North Essex station of Colchester (the station stop on route to Norwich) and London.

Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)





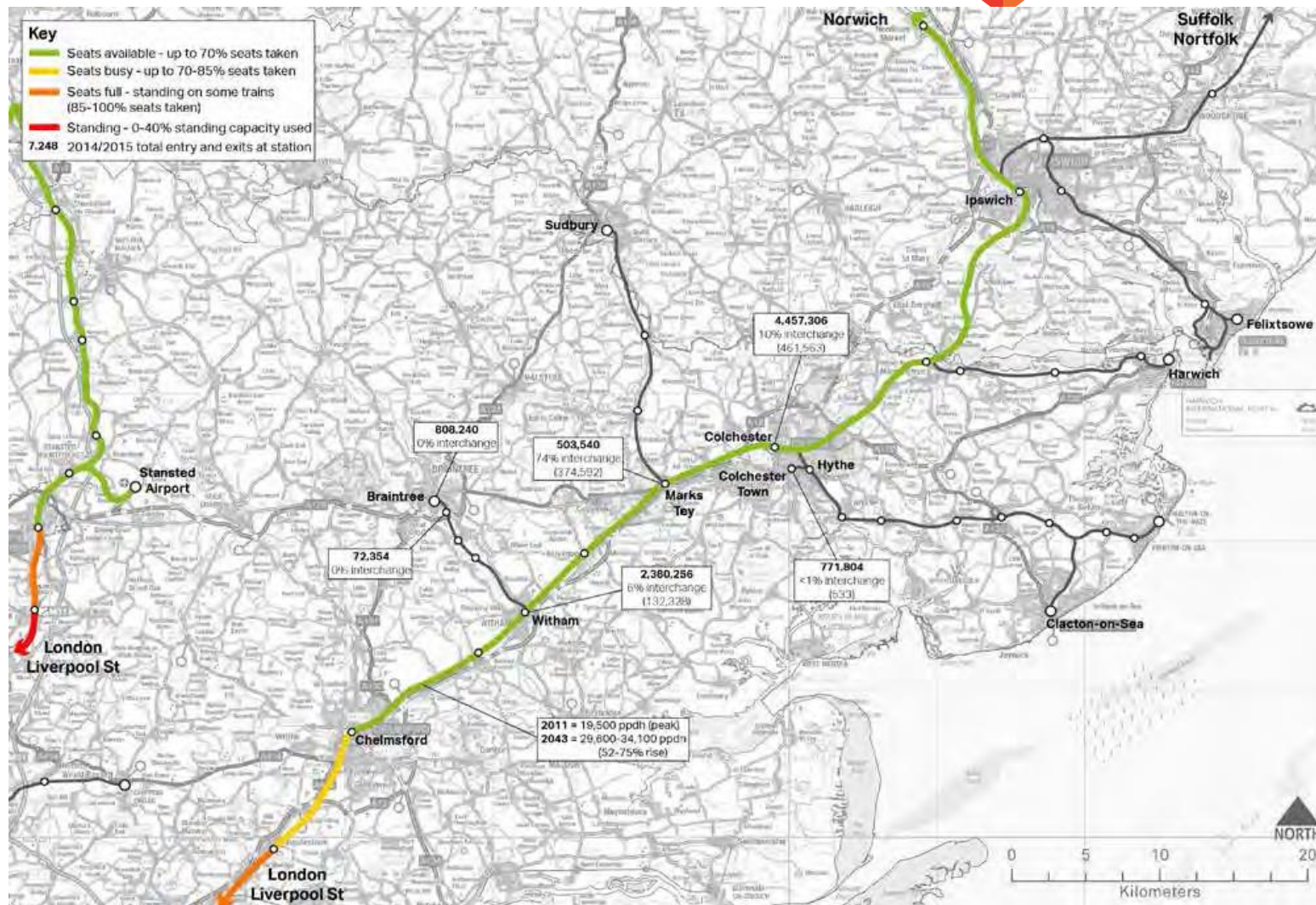
**Figure 9: Existing Rail Peak Hour Frequencies**



Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)



**Figure 10: Existing Rail Capacity**



Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)





- 5.48 Network Rail highlights current (2013), and future (2019, 2023 & 2043) capacity constraints on the GEML based on the peak period 08.00-09.00. Within the development horizons for the proposed sites it is likely extensive capacity and overcrowding issues will be apparent on this line with the majority of the line from Colchester towards London at up to 100% of seats taken with standing up to 100% capacity met from Chelmsford Station, south to London. Networks Rail predications are based on an increase in morning peak passenger demand into London of 32% by 2023 and 75% by 2043. It is estimated that there will be a shortfall of 3,000 seats at peak times by 2031 if no action is taken to increase seating capacity.
- 5.49 The data on capacity constraints suggest that in 2013 during peak hour operations the GEML experiences constraints (seats full) from approximately Ingatestone onwards towards London, whilst the remaining sections of the line northwards operate at satisfactory crowding levels (up to 70% of seats taken).
- 5.50 Similarly to 2013, constraints on the network are only anticipated to occur from Chelmsford onwards to London, with all seats full and constraints on standing capacity (up to 40% of space taken) from Ingatestone onwards.
- 5.51 In 2023, the pattern is anticipated to worsen with seating constraints predicted to start at Witham, whilst from Chelmsford onwards to London there are standing constraints apparent, specifically from Ingatestone onwards, which is anticipated to see up to 80% standing capacity taken.
- 5.52 By 2043 it is anticipated that rail capacity on the GEML will be extremely constrained, with seating full from Marks Tey to Chelmsford and from Chelmsford to London standing at 100% capacity.
- 5.53 Network Rail have identified possible future upgrades (2043 horizon) to the branch lines that link with the GEML, these include new loops to enable two-way running along the line, thus doubling rail frequencies, and a new passing loop for freight transit, which is proposed north of Witham to provide robust capacity for the addition of a third London to Norwich service all day alongside the existing and future freight services levels.
- 5.54 A new station is proposed by Chelmsford County Council in partnership with Network Rail for Beaulieu Park (between Chelmsford and Hatfield Peverel), proposed to accommodate the anticipated increases in passenger demand relating to the extension to Beaulieu Park residential development. In addition to this, a third track will be built north of Chelmsford for between 3.5-5.5 miles to allow additional capacity. Along with this ECC proposal, a BRT route connecting with the city centre is proposed.
- 5.55 Stresses outlined in the predictions above are likely to impact on the GNCP due to the interchange at Witham reaching full capacity. Additional travel is required once arriving at Braintree station which would also deter some visitors from utilising this train line. Braintree, Freeport train station is approximately 3.5km from GNCP and Braintree town centre train station is approximately 3km away, both of which are further than people would reasonably be expected to walk meaning another form of public transport would be needed to visit the site. The nearest bus stop is outside Chatsworth House approximately 520m east of the site in Great Notley which is still a considerable distance to walk for the predominant customer group of families with children.

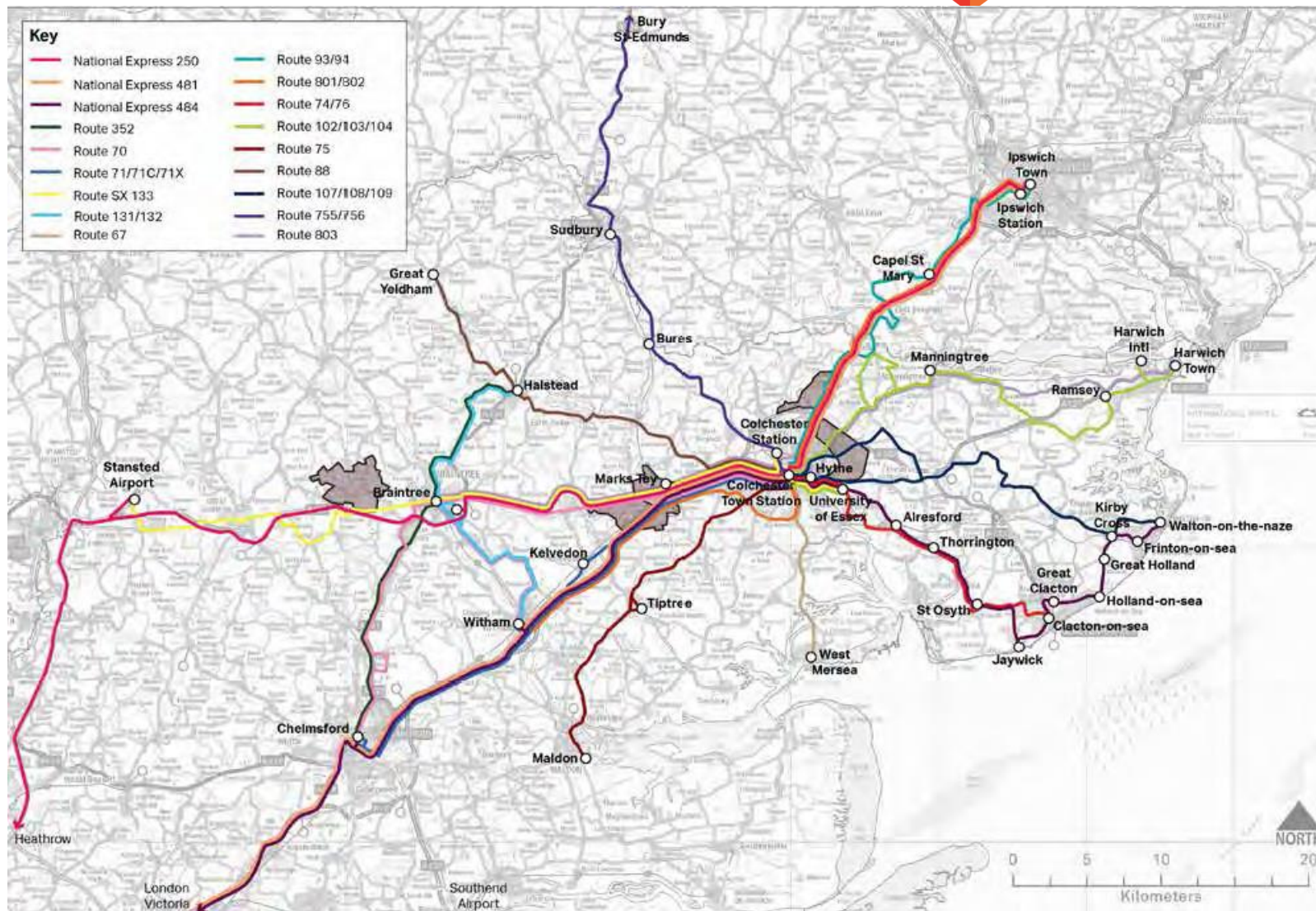
Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)

## **Bus Infrastructure**

- 5.56 A total of 18 'inter-regional' bus routes run between the town and city centres in the north Essex region. Bus provision is predominantly along the north-south corridor between Colchester and Chelmsford with various longer distance services linking Stansted Airport. There are also a relatively high number of radial bus routes from Colchester town centre in comparison to Braintree. For example, this will be a key consideration when developing a future transportation network between towns and the identified sites.



**Figure 11: Existing North Essex Strategic Bus Network**



Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)



**Table 28: Bus Routes and Frequencies**

| National Express Coach | Route  | Average 2-way Frequency                                   |
|------------------------|--|---|
| 250                    | Ipswich to Stansted via Colchester, Marks Tey and Braintree                          | 11 per day (including night services from 02:00 to 22:00) |
| 481                    | London Victoria to Ipswich via Chelmsford, Marks Tey and Colchester                  | 4 per day   |
| 484                    | London Victoria to Walton-on-the-Naze via Chelmsford, Colchester and Clacton-on-Sea. | 1 per day   |

| Other Interurban Bus | Route   | Average 2-way Frequency   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| 362                  | Chelmsford to Halstead via Braintree  | 2 per day   |
| 70                   | Colchester to Chelmsford via Braintree  | 2-3 per hour  |
| 71                   | Colchester to Chelmsford via Witham and Kelvedon.   | Every 30-40 mins  |
| SX133                | Stansted Airport to the University of Essex in Colchester via Braintree, Marks Tey and Colchester | 1 per hour to Braintree and approx. 1 every 2 hours continuing to the University. |
| 132                  | Halstead to Witham via Braintree  | 30 mins   |
| 93/94                | Colchester to Ipswich via Capel St Mary   | 1-2 per day   |
| 801/802              | Witham to Ipswich via Marks Tey and Colchester  | 1-2 per day   |
| 74/76                | Colchester to Clacton-on-Sea  | Approx. 1 per hour  |
| 102/103/104          | University of Essex in Colchester to Harwich via Colchester and Manningtree                       | 2 per hour  |
| 75                   | Colchester to Maldon via Tiptree  | 1-2 per hour  |
| 88                   | Colchester to Great Yeldham via Halstead  | 1 per day to and from Great Yeldham, 1 per hour between Halstead and Colchester   |
| 105/107/109          | Colchester to Walton-on-the-Naze  | 1 every 2 hours   |
| 803                  | Witham to Harwich via Braintree, Marks Tey, Colchester and Manningtree                            | 2-3 per day   |



|         |   |   |
|---------|---|---|
| 755/756 | Colchester to Bury St Edmunds via Sudbury | 1 service per hour to and from Sudbury, 1 service per hour between Sudbury and Bury St Edmunds (indirect service) |
| 67      | Colchester to West Mersea                 | Up to 3 per hour  |

Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)

5.57 Bus routes and their frequencies are provided in the table above. The National Express coach 250 stops at Braintree and consists of 11 services per day. Bus routes 362, 70, SX133, 132 and 803 all stop in Braintree. The route with the highest frequency of service is 132 from Halstead to Witham which is a local bus route. This does not support a wide range of people wanting to visit the park from the wider Essex context and beyond. The bus routes travelling further across Essex do not run as frequently as evidenced by routes 362, 70 and 803 which extend as far as Chelmsford, Colchester and Harwich respectively and feature just 2-3 services per day.

Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)

### Cycle Infrastructure

5.58 The National Cycle Network (NCN) is a series of safe, traffic-free paths and quiet on-road cycling and walking routes that connect to every major town and city. This is depicted in the figure below.

5.59 The Network passes within a mile of half of all UK homes and now stretches over 14,000 miles across the length and breadth of the UK. Almost 5 million people use the NCN. Sustrans note that over 27 million trips on the network are made by children traveling to and from school.

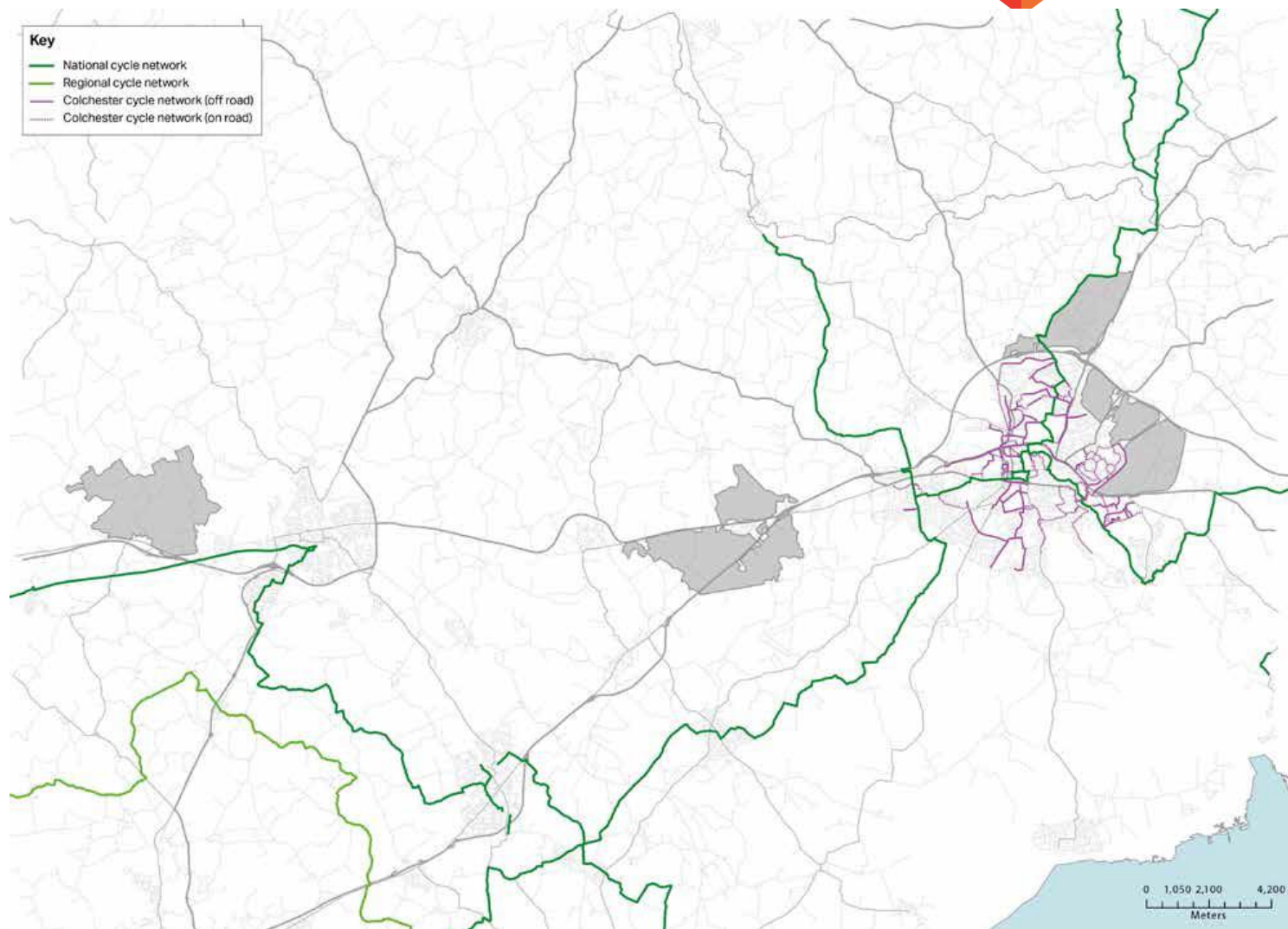
5.60 National Route 16 operates in Essex and the first section connects Route 13 near Stansted via Great Dunmow, Braintree and Witham and continues to the intersection of Route 1 near Great Totham. The second section will connect Basildon with Shoeburyness, near Southend-on-Sea. Route 16 starts at the intersection with Route 13 at Birchanger near Stansted. The route heads south-east on bridle paths from the village of Birchanger near Stansted to join the Flich Way.

Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)





**Figure 12: North Essex Existing Long Distance Cycle Network**



Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)

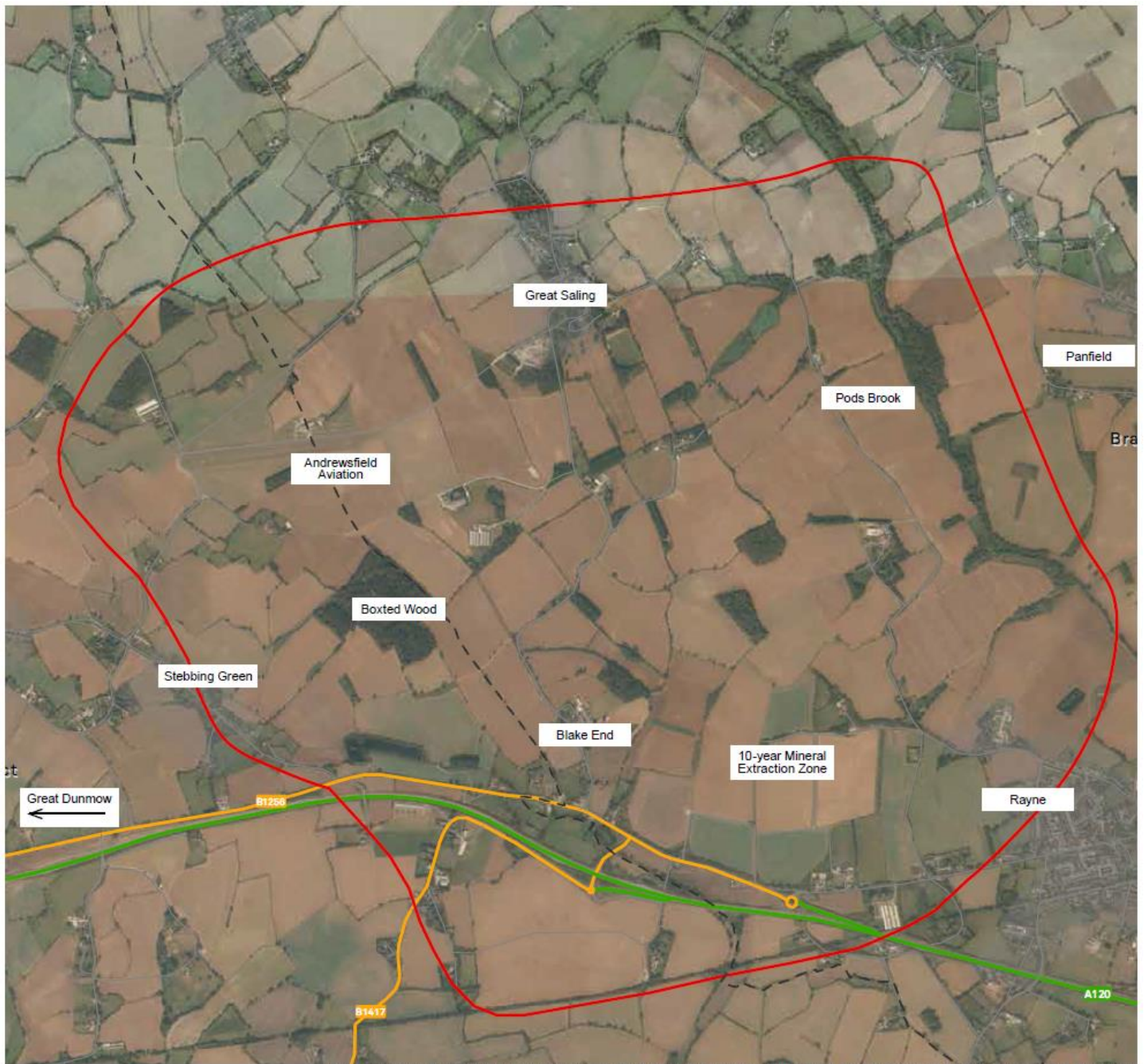




## North Essex Garden Communities

- 5.61 In Essex, as elsewhere, the influences of population and economic growth do not stop at administrative boundaries. Settlement patterns, migration flows, commuting and strategic infrastructure needs all have significant influences within and between local authority areas.
- 5.62 Local plans are the main vehicle for conveying an area's growth requirements and how these will be accommodated. However, individual local authority boundaries cannot encapsulate the geographies of issues that transcend those boundaries. Through active and on-going collaboration the authorities can plan, manage and review strategic objectives for the effective implementation of sustainable development and enhanced environments.
- 5.63 Consequently, the neighbouring authorities of Braintree, Colchester and Tendring have agreed to come together through a shared desire to promote sustainable growth and the particular need to articulate the strategic priorities within the wider area and how these will be addressed. Central to this is the effective delivery of planned strategic growth, particularly housing and employment development, with the necessary supporting infrastructure.
- 5.64 The Common Strategic Part 1 for the independent Local Plans of Braintree District, Colchester Borough and Tendring District Councils ensures constructive engagement between these authorities in meeting the Duty to Co-operate requirements of the Localism Act (2011) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012). The geographic and functional relationship between the authorities' areas is also demonstrated by the fact that together they form the majority of a single Housing Market Area (HMA) for planning purposes.
- 5.65 The Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans is intended to form part of each of the authorities' separate Local Plan, with the main purpose of covering the strategic Local Plan requirements of:
- Articulating a spatial portrait of the area, including its main settlements and strategic infrastructure, as a framework for accommodating future planned growth;
  - Setting out the numbers of additional homes and jobs across the area that will be needed covering the period to 2036 ;
  - Providing a strategic vision for how planned growth in north and central Essex will be realised;
  - Setting strategic objectives and policies for key growth topics; and
  - Highlighting the key strategic growth locations across the area and the necessary new or upgraded infrastructure to support this growth.

**Figure 13: Map of Garden Community West of Braintree**



Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)



- 5.66 The site in figure above labelled West of Braintree is an identified option within the Strategic Part 1 for the Local Plans of Braintree, Colchester and Tendring Councils. Its allocation in a strategic plan, and the likelihood that it will come forward later in the aforementioned plan periods, means that commitments as to the site boundary have not yet been made. It should be noted that further detail on the specific scheme will be the focus of a forthcoming masterplan.
- 5.67 As part of the Garden Community ethos, a large amount of publicly accessible open space is required, which could take the form of a new Country Park. Once again, this will be set out in a forthcoming masterplan, which will be the focus of a separate public consultation.
- 5.68 The site depicted above contains the minerals and waste site A9 from the Minerals Local Plan, put forward by Lafarge Tarmac. Located on the south east of the site at Broadfields Farm, this area is identified in the ECC Mineral Site Restoration for Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) as a flagship site to provide 50ha of habitat indicatively depicted in maps as lowland acid grassland, lowland meadow and reedbeds. The SPG responds to Policy S12 in the Minerals Local Plan (MLP) and details the requirements for minerals site restoration and habitat provision.

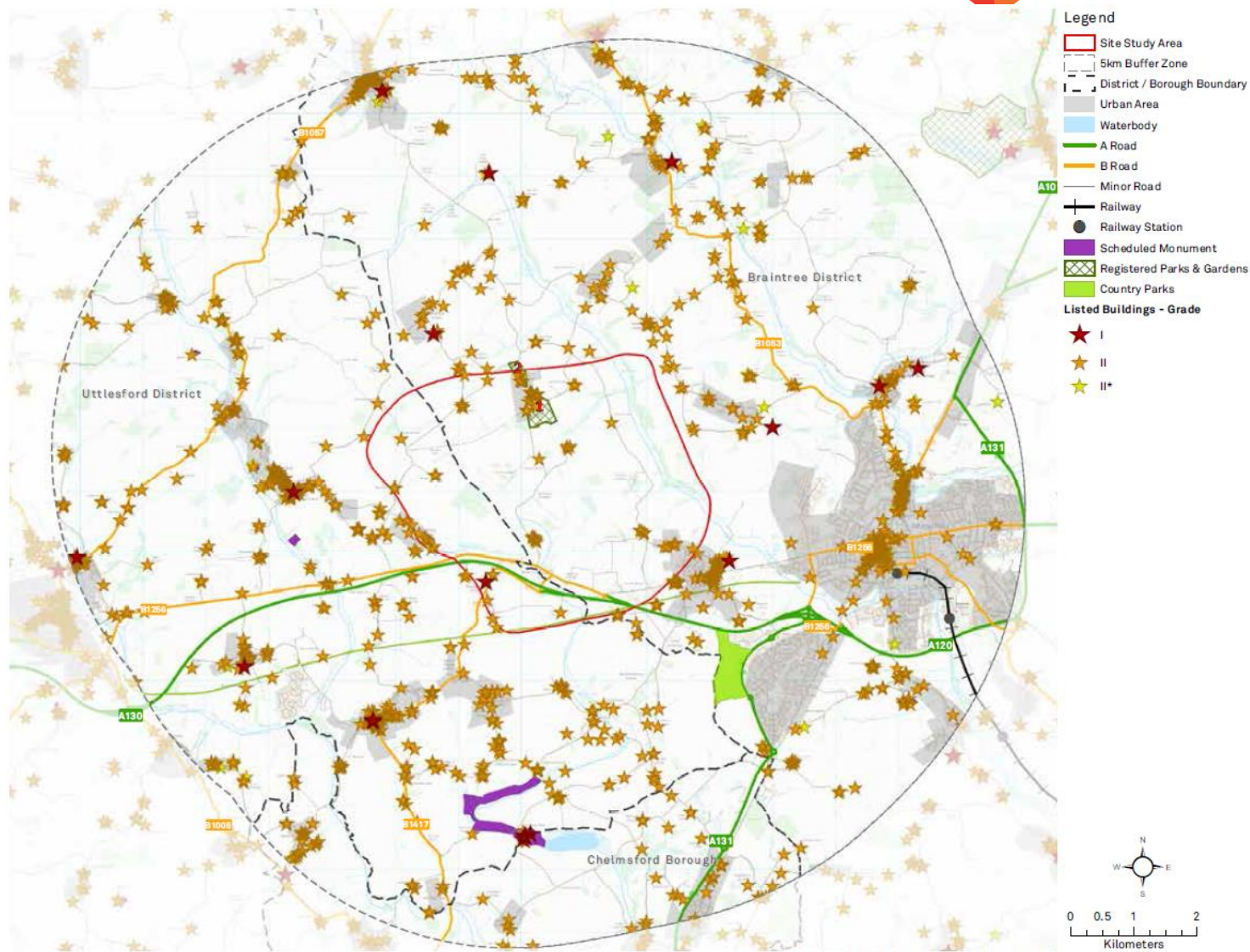
Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)

- 5.69 The figure below maps the location of the West of Braintree Garden Community and highlights the location of water bodies, listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered parks and gardens. The green shaded area on the map represents GNCP.
- 5.70 There are no registered parks or gardens or ancient scheduled monuments within the vicinity of GNCP and the site in its current state is not in proximity to any listed buildings. If the site were to be expanded to the west into Uttlesford as discussed throughout this report, the extension would be located close to the grade II listed Spinners and grade II listed Little Common Cottage, both of which are on Long Lane south of the A120. If this site expansion were to occur, any land uses proposed will have to take the listed buildings into consideration.





**Figure 14: West Braintree Recreational and Heritage Assets**



Source: North Essex Garden Communities Concept Feasibility Study Baseline Compendium (June 2016)



## 6. Operational Analysis

### Staffing issues

- 6.1 As mentioned in the workshop with officers of both ECC and BDC, resources are an issue within the site particularly in the peak season. Inadequate staff numbers are problematic to providing positive visitor experiences and in promoting the park for returning tourists. In part, this relates to the gap in funding available for the operational function of the destination park, where capital for maintenance of existing facilities and for investment in further facilities is limited. However, an opportunity exists to engage in developer discussions for Section 106 and CIL contributions for any additional development which can be redirected to funding staffing and maintenance.
- 6.2 Improvements could be made to the operational aspect of the site through the hiring of additional staff, potentially made possible by the opportunities outlined in the paragraph above. The introduction of an information point for visitors with a full time ranger present has been undertaken and improved the tourist experience on site.

Source: Strategic Workshop Review (Pete and Emma)

- 6.3 Capacity issues associated with staffing levels have resulted in the organisation of events falling to others. Instead of taking a leading role in organising events, the current approach is for staff to encourage external groups to use the site for their own organised activities. This is dominated largely by local running groups and school cross country runs. A Parkrun event takes place every Saturday and a Junior Parkrun on Sundays.
- 6.4 The staff based at the park orchestrate the daily operational duties of the park and facilitate the longer term aspirations as set out in the site management plan. Staff on-site consists of 1 full time site manager, 2 full time rangers, 1 seasonal ranger and 1 caretaker. The Sky Rope facility team is comprised of 1 full time Sky Ropes manager, 3 full time assistants who work seasonally adjusted hours and up to 10 casual staff who can be called upon when required, particularly in peak season.

Source: GNCP ECC data

- 6.5 The service also employs a Car Park Warden. There is a pay and display system in some of the country parks' car parks which is monitored for compliance by the Car Park Warden. This removes the site staff from the realm of administering fines and enforcing the pay and display parking system. GNCP operates an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) barrier system. This is a recent addition to the park and started in June 2015.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020

### Asset management

- 6.6 Upon handover of the site management to ECC Country Parks, the new site manager has been granted an event licence with conditions. The event licence permits the Site Manager to run an event with an attendance of up to 2500 people at any one time.
- 6.7 The main planning for external events such as the charity runs on site is undertaken by the organisation coming to use the park in liaison with the ranger staff available on the day. The Discovery Centre can be used as a base for these events making use of the facilities available.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020

- 6.8 Day to day operations on the site conducted by the staff are primarily focused on ensuring the presentation of the site meets the expectations and requirements for safe public access. Estate management works include daily



checks and repairs of the play equipment, bridges, footpaths and signage. Ecological management is predominantly mowing the meadows and grassy slopes and the removal of the subsequent cuttings. Hedgerow management is undertaken using a tractor mounted flail. The large amenity grass areas are mown by the BDC maintenance team.

- 6.9 The Football Foundation (FF) 2015/16 M&E survey of GNCP assessed the management and maintenance of the football pitches on the site. Located on the site are changing rooms, a MUGA, grass pitches and AGP pitches including a rubber crump pile for the 3G surface. Currently there is no hired, volunteer, teacher or general workforce employed for these facilities and coaching for the football clubs is provided through a service level agreement with Braintree Town Football Club.

**Table 29: Site hours**

|      | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Open | 13  | 13  | 13  | 13  | 13  | 8   | 8   |
| Used | 10  | 11  | 5   | 11  | 10  | 3   | 6   |

Source: Football Foundation 2015/16 M&E survey – GNCP

- 6.10 In addition, football festivals take place on the site, with the Summer Soccer Camp and Soccability Festival drawing 120 and 56 attendees respectively. The site is open for 13 hours on weekdays and 8 on the weekends and is heavily used on the majority of these days as demonstrated in the table above which relates to the issue of no workforce for these facilities highlighted in the above commentary.

**Table 30: AGP maintenance**

| Task                       | Frequency   | Responsibility        |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Seam repairs               | Six-monthly | Contractor            |
| Rubber infill top dressing | Quarterly   | Contractor            |
| Decompaction               | Quarterly   | Contractor            |
| Brushing                   | Weekly      | Local Authority (BDC) |

**Table 31: Grass pitch maintenance**

| Task           | Frequency | Responsibility        |
|----------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Weed treatment | Yearly    | Local Authority (BDC) |
| Over-seeding   | Yearly    | Local Authority (BDC) |
| Aeration       | Quarterly | Local Authority (BDC) |
| Top dressing   | Yearly    | Local Authority (BDC) |
| Fertilising    | Yearly    | Local Authority (BDC) |
| Line marking   | Weekly    | Local Authority (BDC) |
| Grass mowing   | Bi-weekly | Local Authority (BDC) |

Source: Football Foundation 2015/16 M&E survey – GNCP



- 6.11 Feedback from the survey was generally good with a rating of 'very good' assigned to the governance of the site. The reason for this was cited as ensuring Joint Partnership Board meetings are held every 6 months with Members from ECC and BDC present as well as operational meetings held every 3 months attended by site staff, council officers and main stakeholders with FA and FF staff invited.
- 6.12 Site finances were rated as good with an annual income of £43,009 for 2015/16 stated, management of the site was good as there are site rangers and a caretaker present on the site as well as LA staff attending as required and accessibility was good, allowing free access to the MUGA if it is not already booked in advance by another user. Partnerships were also good, with Braintree Town Football Club and Great Notley Youth Football Club attending all operational meetings. Other areas where rated as 'okay' community 'ownership' and marketing where improvements could be sought.
- 6.13 In relation to the football development plan, the overall football development was rated as 'good', however, there are some areas for improvement such as with disabled participation, race equality and community engagement with were all rated 'okay'. Participation of women and girls in football was rated as 'poor' on the site. The table below looks at participation in more detail.

**Table 32: Participation**

|                      | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | Change   |
|----------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Male: football       | 721     | 686     | -4.85%   |
| Female: football     | 51      | 36      | -29.41%  |
| Male: non-football   | 9       | 0       | -100.00% |
| Female: non-football | 42      | 50      | 19.05%   |
| Total                | 823     | 772     | -6.20%   |

Source: Football Federation 2015/16 M&E survey – GNCP

- 6.14 The table above demonstrates the evidence supporting the 'poor' rating of inclusion for women and girls on the site. 88.7% of people engaging in activities in GNCP were men in 2014/15 and just 11.3% were women. 2015/16 registered a reduction in the numbers of people participating in activities but did not experience a significant change as 88.9% of people were men and 11.1% were women.
- 6.15 A shift was recorded in the type of activities that each gender participates in. Male participation in non-football activities as plummeted to zero with 100% taking part in football. Female participation has experienced a reversal of this trend, decreasing numbers involved in football and increasing participation in non-football activities. Overall participation for both genders decreased, with 51 fewer people engaging in either football or non-football activities on site.

Source: Football Foundation 2015/16 M&E survey – GNCP



## 7. Finances

### Funding

- 7.1 Funding for staffing and maintenance for components of the park such as footpaths is not allocated a definitive capital allowance at the start of the financial year due to fluctuating costs of other elements of the park. Instead, the funding for these activities is typically derived from remaining capital from the overall GNCP budget at the end of the year. Below are the expenditures from 2015/16 provided as indicative of annual costs.

**Table 33: GNCP, Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands Finances 2015/16 Expenditure**

| Category                            | Expenditure | Items                                 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| Employees                           | £206,201.00 | Salaries, NI contributions, pensions. |
| Park upkeep, materials and supplies | £66,590.00  | Materials for repairs and upgrades    |
| Vehicle                             | £15,217.00  | Monthly lease, fuel and service       |
| Total                               | £288,008.00 |                                       |

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020.

- 7.2 The table above illustrates the expenditures associated with the operational aspects of GNCP, Flitch Way and associated woodlands including the use of vehicles on site. These costs totalled £288,008.00 for the 2015/16 financial year.
- 7.3 Casual employees are employed on a zero hour contract which allows Site Managers to employ them only for the hours appropriate to the season. The cost of these staff has to come from the existing budget and so must be justified against other costs. In most cases the costs are covered by additional income brought in by their work for example through the offer of refreshments or the provision of a chargeable event or activity.

**Table 34: GNCP, Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands Finances 2015/16 Income**

| Category            | Income      | Items                                   |
|---------------------|-------------|---|
| Car parking         | £133,106.00 | Machine throughput                      |
| Rents               | £21,792.00  | Rayne café                              |
| Membership fees     | £2,189.00   | Accommodation                           |
| Events              | £34,565.00  | Admission                               |
| Lettings – external | £3,170.00   | Conferences                             |
| Lettings – internal | £8,920.00   | Conferences                             |
| Others              | £50,000.00  | Braintree District Council contribution |



|       |             |  |
|-------|-------------|--|
| Total | £253,742.00 |  |
|-------|-------------|--|

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020.

- 7.4 The table above provides information on the various revenue streams present on the site including facilities and events as well as contributions from BDC. This income totalled £253,742.00 for the 2015/16 financial year.
- 7.5 The tables above also demonstrate that operating costs for GNCP, Flitch Way and associated woodlands are in deficit of £34,266.00, providing evidence to support the aspiration for GNCP to become a self-supporting and financially viable entity to alleviate the strain on operating costs across the sites. The figures represented here are not exhaustive of the incomes and expenditures on the site. Below is a detailed breakdown of incomes and costs for the football facilities present on the site which positively contribute to the sites finances.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020.

### Fundraising / revenue costs

- 7.6 An important revenue stream for the park derives from the AGP, MUGA and grass football pitches used by local football teams.

**Table 35: Football Finances**

|                       | AGP         | Natural turf: U7/U8 | Natural Turf: U15/U16 | Natural Turf: Senior Football |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Income                | £120,744.00 | £2,700.00           | £12,600.00            | £25,920.00                    |
| Cost                  | £36,260.00  | £4,200.00           | £13,650.00            | £15,825.00                    |
| Net income/loss       | £84,484.00  | £-1,500.00          | £-1,050.00            | £10,095.00                    |
| Total net income/loss | £92,029.00  |                     |                       |                               |

- 7.7 The AGP in particular incurred significant capital costs in its construction but also demands higher rent rates. Sized at 106m x 70m and aimed at senior football, the rent from the AGP provides £40 revenue per game per  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the pitch and £100.00 if the whole pitch is hired for one game. It is estimated based on the assumption that there will be 12 hires of the  $\frac{1}{3}$  sized pitches for 36 weeks of the year that the yearly income for renting  $\frac{1}{3}$  sized pitches is £17,280.00. The full pitch is hired fewer times, estimated to be 108 hires per year based on 3 hires per week for 36 weeks of the year. The yearly revenue raised by the full pitch hiring is therefore £10,800.00, totalling £28,080.00 per APG per year. There are 4.3 AGP units present on the site providing a total of £120,744. Annual costs for the facilities are set against the original capital cost for the facility, and are set at 0.5% for maintenance and 3.2% for the sinking fund rate. Annual costs are therefore calculated at £36,260.00, which leaves profit of £84,484.00 per annum for all of the AGP pitches.
- 7.8 The natural turf pitches provide less revenue each year. The hiring of a small natural turf football pitch for U7/U8 is £25.00 per game. Estimating the annual number of hires is 36 based on 1 game every week for 36 weeks, the annual revenue generated for these pitch types is £900.00. Total income from these pitches per year is £2,700.00 as there are 3 pitches on the site available for hire. Annual costs for the facilities are set against the original capital cost for the facility, and are set at 17% for maintenance and 4% for the sinking fund rate. Annual costs are therefore calculated at £4,200.00 which leaves a deficit for the U7/U8 pitches of £1,500.00 per annum.



- 7.9 Hiring a natural turf pitch on GNCP for U15/U16 youth football costs £35 per game and similar to above, it is estimated the pitch will be hired 36 times a year based on 1 game per week for 36 weeks. This provides £1,260.00 per pitch per annum, and £12,600.00 when calculated for all 10 pitches on site. Annual costs for the facilities are set against the original capital cost for the facility, and are set at 17% for maintenance and 4% for the sinking fund rate. Subtracting the annual cost of £13,650.00 leaves a deficit of £1,050.00 for the U15/U16 pitches per annum.
- 7.10 Total revenue provided by the full sized natural turf pitches for senior football is calculated at £25,920.00. This is based on a cost per game of £45.00 hired once a week for 36 weeks producing £1620.00 of revenue per pitch and multiplied by the 16 pitches on site. Annual costs for the facilities are set against the original capital cost for the facility, and are set at 16.7% for maintenance and 4.4% for the sinking fund rate. Subtracting the annual costs of £15,825.00 leaves a profit of £10,095.00 for all senior natural turf football pitches.
- 7.11 Current trends demonstrate that the AGP pitches create a significant annual profit for GNCP of £84,484.00 followed by the senior natural turf pitches generating £10,095.00 of profit per annum. The U7/U8 small natural turf pitches and U15/U16 natural turf youth pitches both operate in a deficits, calculated at £1,500.00 and £1,050.00 respectively.
- 7.12 Further financial considerations for the football pitches on site are the lifetime costs of the facilities. The life cycle for all of the pitches is 25 years and during that time it is calculated that the total cost for the AGP senior pitches will be £3,897,950.00, for the natural turf U7/U8 pitches it will cost £315,000.00, for the natural turf U15/U16 pitches it will cost £3,412,500.00 and for natural turf senior pitches it will be £6,330,000.00. The overall lifetime cost for all of the pitches is £13,955,450.00.

Source: (Football pitch capital and lifecycle costs calculator)

**Table 36: Parking revenue 2016-17**

| Month  | Value      | Tickets Sold |
|--------|------------|--------------|
| Apr-16 | £19,771.00 | 5,618        |
| May-16 | £20,336.00 | 5,694        |
| Jun-16 | £14,368.85 | 4,117        |
| Jul-16 | £25,152.25 | 6,850        |
| Aug-16 | £51,326.10 | 12,718       |
| Sep-16 | £15,924.75 | 4,514        |
| Oct-16 | £15,865.90 | 4,649        |
| Nov-16 | -          | -            |
| Dec-16 | -          | -            |
| Jan-17 | -          | -            |
| Feb-17 | -          | -            |
| Mar-17 | -          | -            |

Source: Country Parks parking income and visitor numbers, ECC and BDC data

- 7.13 Additional revenue is generated from car parking charges on the site. Data was collected from April 2016 to October 2016 and as anticipated, the highest income from car parking charges was in the month of August when visitor numbers peak. A total of 12,718 parking tickets were purchased in August, totalling £51,326.10 of income.





7.14 June registered the fewest parking tickets purchased with just 4,117 tickets bought for a value of £14,368.85. This is in contrast with the identified trend of increasing parking revenues towards the peak season months, however when assessing the trends, the value for June appears anomalous. As values rose from £19,771.00 in April to £20,336.00 in May before the dip in June to £14,368.85 to resume the trend of increasing towards the summer registering £25,152.25 for July and £51,326.10 in August.

**Table 37: Parking revenues 2013-14 to 2016-17**

| Month  | 2016-17    | 2015-16    | 2014-15    | 2013-14    | Change from 2013-14 to latest figures |
|--------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------------|
| Apr-16 | £19,771.00 | £23,450.00 | £22,595.68 | £14,922.54 | 32.5%                                 |
| May-16 | £20,336.00 | £16,110.90 | £12,183.17 | £8,824.14  | 130.5%                                |
| Jun-16 | £14,368.85 | £14,406.50 | £10,566.95 | £9,724.46  | 47.8%                                 |
| Jul-16 | £25,152.25 | £16,733.35 | £11,644.02 | £13,177.26 | 90.9%                                 |
| Aug-16 | £51,326.10 | £55,839.25 | £26,254.45 | £32,839.44 | 56.3%                                 |
| Sep-16 | £15,924.75 | £18,089.80 | £12,796.42 | £8,667.77  | 83.7%                                 |
| Oct-16 | £15,865.90 | £15,866.90 | £7,160.63  | £7,939.76  | 99.8%                                 |
| Nov-16 | -          | £5,662.70  | £5,656.50  | £5,867.44  | -3.5%                                 |
| Dec-16 | -          | £6,688.75  | £2,964.28  | £5,291.44  | 26.4%                                 |
| Jan-17 | -          | £7,812.55  | £9,053.91  | £6,405.89  | 22.0%                                 |
| Feb-17 | -          | £9,890.55  | £8,185.16  | £6,380.17  | 55.0%                                 |
| Mar-17 | -          | £12,809.90 | £8,215.56  | £9,029.48  | 41.9%                                 |

Source: Country Parks parking income and visitor numbers, ECC and BDC data

7.15 Examining the parking income against previous years, as well as June appearing anomalous within the context of the 2016-17 figures, there has been a continued increase in parking income in June for the years 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 but the income stagnated in 2016-17. The value rose from £9,724.46 to £14,406.50 between 2013-14 and 2015-16 and then demonstrated no significant change for 2016-17 with £14,368.85. A similar stagnation and even decreases in revenue were experienced across other months. Compared with last year, April, August and September collected less revenue from parking despite trends from 2013-14 to 2015-16 indicating an annual increase for each of these months.

7.16 May and July registered an increase in parking revenues in 2016-17 compared with the previous year displaying an annual rise. The largest percentage increase between 2015-16 and 2016-17 was for July, where revenues rose by 50.3% on the previous year. May experienced an increase of 26.2% over the same time period. These months also demonstrated a consistent increase in parking revenues from 2013-14, with the only exception being July 2014-15 where a dip in income was registered. March also displayed a similar trend of continued annual increases but data for 2016-17 is not yet available.

7.17 As demonstrated in the table above, November is the only month in which decreases in revenue since 2013-14 were registered. The decrease of 3.5% is comparatively small, but the increases in other months in the same time period are significantly higher. The next lowest increases in parking revenue are in January and December with 22.0% and 26.4% respectively, demonstrating together with the figures for November than winter months experience a slower rate of increase in parking ticket revenue.



- 7.18 The highest increase since 2013-14 was registered in May which has seen revenue from parking grow by 130.5%. October was the second highest with an increase of 99.8% and July was third with an increase of 90.9%. May and July increases fall in line with the trend of peak months experiencing higher increases, but October deviates from this as it is outside of the peak season.
- 7.19 As mentioned in paragraph 6.6 above, the ANPR is a new introduction to the site and is ticketless, using the number plate to record entry and exit times and from that providing a charge. Calculations suggest that car parking income through the new system will be in the region of £200,000 for 2016/17.

Source: GNCP, ECC data

## Catering

- 7.20 The catering operation is managed through a lease to an external operator. There are 60 covers in the visitor centre allocated for the café. There is a meeting room available for hire which can hold up to 30 people when arranged as a café and 50 when arranged in the style of a theatre. The majority of hires for the meeting room are from ECC. A kiosk was opened in 2015 offering takeaway drinks and ice cream. The catering concession can realise a turnover of £250,000.00. The rent for the operator generates between £30,000.00 and £40,000.00.

Source: GNCP, ECC data

## Budget

- 7.21 The park budget is funded through contributions from ECC and BDC, by revenue generated by staff on the park and by grants awarded by other organisations. The current trend is towards diminishing the contributions from ECC and BDC which are raised through council-tax and working towards self-financing parks. This transition to different finance streams has the potential to influence the features as the park adapts to new methods of raising revenue.
- 7.22 Each site has an allocated budget which covers the day-to-day running of the site including staff costs, utilities, vehicle recharges, IT, general site maintenance and a purchasing budget which is used to purchase miscellaneous products and services throughout the year. Sites also have an income expectation which is also shown on their budget as a negative value. Income can come from a variety of sources such as running chargeable events, retail spend, catering spend, rent and sale of goods such as hay and wood products. For most sites the majority of the income is from car parking charges.
- 7.23 The Senior Ranger, overseen by one of the Area Managers, is responsible for managing the park budget. Monthly reports are provided by the finance team and issues are raised at monthly management meetings to minimise the likelihood of unexpected profits or losses at the end of the year. The risk of overspend at the end of a year for any one park is spread over the entire Country Park department. This means that the GNCP budget is subject to change in order to channel funds to another park.
- 7.24 The Education Team is funded through a separate Country Parks education budget. This covers the cost of providing an Education Officer who manages the remaining small budget for the purchase of educational resources and marketing and promotion of the sites. Educational visits, which are booked directly with the Education Team, bring income into this budget. Any profit from educational visits contributes to the budget available for resources and marketing of the education service across the parks.
- 7.25 A budget is held centrally for Country Parks. This covers many of the general costs of the facilities and support provided at County Hall including the cost of central members of County Parks staff such as the Marketing and Visitor Services Team. As such, it provides a budget for marketing and interpretation across the sites. The budget covers the basic costs of providing marketing and promotion for the sites and contributes to provision of one or two



interpretation/signage/information projects across the service per year. There is no income expectation from the Marketing and Visitor Services Team so spending in excess of their available budget has to be resourced from either site budgets, capital budgets or other parts of the central Country Parks budget. Uniform is resourced from the central Country Parks budget. The central budget also covers the costs of basic staff training and development which can be supplemented by site budgets.

- 7.26 The service area budgets are designed to cover the general costs of running and maintaining the service areas. It is generally not possible to carry budget across into a new financial year. Therefore, to resource many new projects or for major works it is necessary to apply for money from the Capital Projects Programme. This is administered centrally and requires the submission of good supporting documentation to the board that administer the budget. In most cases Country Parks bid for capital money to provide new facilities in the parks. Such cases are supported by a business plan and normally result in payback to the ECC through increased income in the parks. This process is managed by the Head of Country Parks with support from the ESH Financial Team and in consultation with the Executive Director of ESH.

Source: GNCP Management Plan 2015-2020



## 8. Next Steps

### Additional baseline data

- 8.1 This base line report was produced using information supplied by ECC and BDC. Further information may be required to provide a more in-depth and comprehensive overview of the existing condition of the site.
- 8.2 Particularly relevant additional datasets include:
- An indication of the political stance for the role of GNCP within the wider context of development in Braintree and neighbouring Districts and Borough;
  - Data on the development of similar Country Parks in the surrounding area of Suffolk and Hertfordshire;
  - More data on resources available for the site and the potential for new resources to support any new development on site;
  - Data on Local Authority ownership and budget management principles within Local Authorities;
  - Conduct site visits to other Country Parks who have expanded their facilities in a similar way;
  - Undertake Stakeholder Engagement (workshop) with Members, Parish Council, Neighbouring Councils and User Groups;
  - Engage with the Football Association/Football Foundation/Fusion lifestyle and Sport England on the Grass Pitches and the AGP and MUGA.

### Vision

- 8.3 This report will be presented to members and senior officers from ECC and BDC at the Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board (JVPB) meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> March. Following this, a member led decision should be made, informed by the evidence in this baseline report, to determine appropriate options for development on the site and select the preferred option to progress to master planning.
- 8.4 Following on from the member led decision, a third party meeting should be undertaken to review the future vision and determine the most appropriate governance arrangements. As part of this, a decision should be made about the appointment a project management team to prepare a scoping document and deliver the review.

### Assessment of how constraints can be accommodated within the masterplan

- 8.5 A number of constraints to the development of the site are highlighted within this report and these would have to be assessed in more detail by relevant specialists in light of any new development proposals. Once an assessment has been conducted, it would then be possible to identify which constraints could be obstructive to development and which might present an opportunity to accommodate additional facilities.
- 8.6 There should be an analysis of the interaction between the site and other neighbouring parks and open spaces building on the information supplied in this report. This should include the typology of facilities and activities on offer as well as how they work with and complement district centres and local neighbourhood offers. Further market



analysis would need to be conducted to achieve this, including the financial viability of any potential uses on site as discussed further below.

- 8.7 The data supplied in this report highlights trends within Braintree and the neighbouring Districts and Boroughs and from this; recommendations should be drawn to provide development options to be included within the masterplan. These recommendations could cover the topics of intensifying existing or introducing new facilities, cultural events, supporting infrastructure, community facilities and sports and leisure activities.
- 8.8 The opportunities for the expansion of the site into the farmland to the west of GNCP should be explored further. As the only potentially suitable direction to expand the site, further information into the ownership of the land and possibility of purchase should be obtained and evaluated against the impact of the new Garden Community to the west of Braintree.

### **Creation of a draft masterplan**

- 8.9 Following the synthesis of the above information, a draft masterplan should be produced which would outline the proposed development of the site over the next 10-15 years. An existing and proposed masterplan should be rendered to provide a visual representation of the constraints and opportunities on the site. The masterplan should include a strategy for:
- The outdoor sports facilities on the site including the football pitches and the MUGA as well as the potential for additional facilities of this type;
  - Car parking and vehicular access on site;
  - Signage across the entire site;
  - The potential expansion of the site into the farmland to the west of the GNCP boundary;
  - The diversification of uses on site to attract visitors to the park during the off peak season;
  - Additional facilities and activities that can be accommodated in accordance with the findings of the discussion of constraints including consultation with specialists and are demonstrated to be financially viable and sustainable. An assessment of utilities may also be required in the event of additional buildings on site.

### **Public consultation**

- 8.10 Once the draft masterplan has been produced, public consultation should be undertaken to gauge opinion on the proposals. Amendments to the masterplan should be made in accordance with comments as far as possible to refine the proposals and produce the final draft of the masterplan before approving and signing off. The masterplan outputs should be informed by public engagement, and demonstrate a sound understanding of opportunities and constraints, resulting in proposals that have a realistic prospect of being deliverable.

### **Timeline**

- 8.11 The GNCP Strategic Review delivery timetable should coincide where possible with the production of relevant Local Plans. BDC aim to undertake Pre Submission Local Plan public consultation in June/July 2017 with submission to the Planning Inspectorate in December and anticipated adoption of Autumn 2018 following public examination. The Colchester Local Plan has a similar timeline, with Pre Submission consultation due to take place in June/July 2017, public examination starting in December 2017 and adoption envisaged for September 2018. Tendring has an





identical timeline for its Local Plan and so the GNCP review should seek to be aligned with each stage of the Plan preparation in order to make use of updated information on the quantum of development proposed in each district and borough. The GNCP Strategic Review should be completed and all elements delivered by September 2018.

- 8.12 The timeline below is indicative of the work programme that would be required to finalise the review by September 2018 to align with Local Plan production. Allowance is made in the timeline for any unforeseen delays in the delivery of work elements with the final draft of the masterplan produced for the JVPB meeting in the summer 2018. This allows for a contingency period of three months to complete work that has fallen behind schedule to ensure the final masterplan is produced alongside relevant Local Plans.

| Date           | Action   |
|----------------|--|
| March 2017     | Baseline report will be presented to ECC and BDC members and senior officers and make a decision regarding options for development as well as a project management team to carry the review forward in line with the vision above in this section of the baseline report. Undertake the collection and analysis of additional baseline data as outlined above in this section of the report. |
| June 2017      | Present findings of the additional baseline data and begin the assessment of how constraints can be accommodated within the masterplan. This date aligns with the Pre Submission Local Plan public consultation dates which should be engaged with.  |
| September 2017 | Present the outcomes of the assessment of how constraints can be accommodated within the masterplan. Begin drafting a masterplan for the site.   |
| December 2017  | Present a draft masterplan. Incorporate comments made by senior officers and members on the masterplan.  |
| March 2018     | Complete final draft of the masterplan to go to public consultation. Public consultation starting in March (over a period of 4-6weeks).  |
| April 2018     | Collate responses from the public consultation and make amendments to the masterplan in light of the results.  |
| June 2018      | Present final draft of the masterplan to members following public consultation.  |
| September 2018 | Incorporate information from adopted Local Plans and sign off masterplan for GNCP.   |

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