

SAY NO

To West of Braintree 'New Town'

Welcome to the SERCLE end of 2016 E-Newsletter

A lot has happened in the past few months and as a valuable supporter, we thought you'd like to know how the campaign is going.

1. With Your Support

- We continue to oppose this development with both Uttlesford and Braintree district councils.
- We have close to 1,000 supporters who have signed our petition. This number is continuing to grow.
- We've raised over £10,000 in pledges from individuals and parish councils. SERCLE cannot thank these people enough. It's kick-started our ability to obtain professional advice. Further information about funding will be released in the New Year.

• What's Next?

We continue to develop our arguments against this new town, release press articles with our message, continue to inform supporters via Facebook, email and our (soon to be released) new website.

• SERCLE needs your help!

If you have spare time to assist the campaign, please contact us at sercle@sercle.org.uk. It may be sharing emails, helping research the internet or handing out flyers.

• Consultation Arguments

The key task we face is the development of our arguments. Given BDC's intransigent attitude towards this new town, SERCLE is preparing our detailed document to present to the Planning Inspectorate.

The process to enhance our arguments is a three-stage process.

- **Stage 1** – Research the internet for evidence i.e. policies, press articles, documents etc
- **Stage 2** – Using the evidence to construct the argument
- **Stage 3** – Carry out a quality check of the argument i.e. does it make sense?

If you can spare as little as an hour a week, please get in touch. You don't need to be an expert as we will provide support and guidance. But if you are expert in a specific field we won't turn you down.

Your assistance will help save our countryside and way of life!

2. Andrewsfield Airfield

Recently we've been making people aware of Andrewsfield.

For example, did you know?

- This local amenity is one of the last public airfields in Uttlesford (excluding Stansted)?
- Andrewsfield Is a highly respected commercial



flying school that provides training for private (PPL) and commercial (CPL) licences.

This allows the qualified pilot to move onto specialist training should they want to fly commercial airlines.

- Provides training for pilots who want to be flying instructors. So not only does it provide a supply of pilots to the UK's aviation business but also the instructors who go on to train pilots at other airfields. The UK Aviation policy states that councils should take that into account. Yes, you've guessed it – neither council have taken this into place. **One even believed the airfield was defunct!**
- It is a popular amenity not just for pilots (both local and further afield) but walkers, cyclists, motor clubs, locals and tourists. If you're into motorbikes, pop along on Thursday lunchtime.
- Was the first A type airfield built by the US in WWII. It is currently registered as a non-scheduled monument however is also utilised by our current military as a training ground.

To address some of this points, SERCLE have invited officials from both councils to visit **but all our requests has been ignored.**

We did have a visit from James Cleverly MP for Braintree. James did state we should keep writing to our local councillors and councils to raise these concerns. Unfortunately, Alan Haselhurst (MP for Saffron Walden) wasn't too keen and wanted to defer the visit until after the decision has been made.

3. Braintree District Council

- **"NEW TOWNS WILL NOT DAMAGE OUR CHARM"**

Yes, you've read it correctly. this is what Cllr Butland (leader of BDC) stated in a recent Braintree and Witham Times press article.



Butland also stated "Around Marks Tey and what would be West Tey there is a mainline railway service and we do not want to plonk these in the middle of nowhere".

So why put a huge new town (West of Braintree) in the middle of nowhere miles from a good rail service?

If you don't agree with Cllr Butland's comments, please write to cllr.gbutland@braintree.gov.uk

To read the full article, please click [HERE](#)

- **AECOM Meeting**

A key part of Government requirements for any development of any garden settlement is local support. Colchester council organised a meeting at Braintree Town Hall where consultants from AECOM¹ wanted to explain to local parish councils and campaign groups (inc. SERCLE) the benefits of having a new town on our doorstep.



¹ Who are AECOM? They are independent consultants who Colchester, Tendring, Braintree and Essex county councils have hired to manage the West of Braintree. If you've heard them name before it's because they also represent the "West of Braintree" landowners.

Before the meeting SERCLE asked for a list of all groups who had been invited - AECOM refused! We know that Stebbing and Felsted parish council wrote a polite refusal. At the meeting, we met up with representatives from Great Saling, Shalford, Bardfield Saling and Rayne. However, we were outnumbered by nearly twice as many AECOM consultants, councillors and council officers in attendance.

The meeting was split into two parts. In part 1, AECOM explained that; "The aim of the workshop is to give you information about the land and what will influence development here, and then allow your imaginations to flow to create initial master plan solutions for the development of the site." and also how future residents would benefit from a new town. Part 2, AECOM wanted the local groups to tell them everything that was special to us (could that be open space, tranquillity, low crime, congestion free roads, low pollution etc?). Our comments would be incorporated into their "master plan".

Unfortunately, after some robust debate during part 1 with issues being raised about lack of consultation, no alternatives being offered in the last Local Plan consultation, the impact to current

residents, lack of trust etc. a break was convened. After an extended break, the officials were informed that we would not participate further. All but a representative from Rayne left the meeting.

In a recent Braintree and Witham [press article](#) Cllr Newton stated: *“Representatives of the local community were recently invited to a workshop to talk about the areas they cherish and would like to protect if a garden community were to go ahead. We received some valuable feedback, including opportunities and constraints of the existing landscape. Some attendees also took the opportunity to note their opposition to the principle of building more homes in the area.”*

This was a great misrepresentation as all but one the attendees took the opportunity to “note their opposition”. However, as SERCLE is very interested in what valuable feedback was supposedly received. Inquiries have been made to the council through the Freedom of Information.

Following this, SERCLE received a letter from the North Essex Garden Communities Project Manager reiterating the purpose of the meetings and that our participation doesn't infer support of the garden settlement. **Pull the other leg! SERCLE do not intend to be part of this “tick box” exercise.**

• Land Delivery Vehicles (LDV)

“Yawn” is probably the first response. If you are a Braintree resident, you really need to pay attention to this!

According to the council's paperwork, for their two New Town, BDC along with Colchester and Essex County council are sharing infrastructure



costs of up to **£2.3 billion**. They hope to recoup the debt by selling the land to developers.

If they get this wrong the legacy Braintree council will leave is not; *“houses for our grandchildren”* (a favourite mantra with BDC councillors) but possibly a bankrupt council, forcing future residents to pick up the bill. Just to add to the worry, SERCLE's initial review of

has identified too many assumptions leading to a project full of risk.

Braintree Council are taking an astronomical risk with taxpayers' money!

Additionally, the creation of these LDV companies was reported in the [Halsted Gazette](#) stating:

“Braintree Council held a Cabinet meeting in late November, at which councillors agreed to set up a company.”

What the council didn't say was the companies were incorporated with Companies House in August 2016. This was before Braintree's draft Local Plan consultation had even closed!

Is it just SERCLE or does this sound like pre-determination?

• 5 Year Land Supply

One of the most significant and **explosive** risks any council faces is **not** having a 5-year land supply.



Put simply this is the number of houses a council has to build per annum for the next 5 years.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The UK Government states - *“Without an up-to-date and demonstrable housing land supply, the total number of houses to be developed in your area could be taken out of your hands.”*

Currently UDC can prove a 5year supply of houses however, BDC cannot! BDC are not building enough houses and for the last three years, there's a significant shortfall. From 2013-2016 only 371 houses per year were built in the district when the target is 845 per annum.

In a recent planning appeal for 37 houses in Great Bardfield, the planning inspector stated:

“..... since the appeal was submitted, the parties now agree that the Council (Braintree) is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. As such its policies relevant to the supply of housing cannot be considered as up to date, as set out in paragraph 49 of the Framework

(the Framework). Consequently, according to paragraph 14, planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole.”

So, Braintree is in a situation that a developer could submit a planning application and if the Council rejects it and then it goes to appeal. The planning inspector will take into consideration that the 5-year housing supply isn't being met. It's now more likely the developer will be successful and that the housing will go ahead.

In conclusion, SERCLE believes that the Council's planning strategy, promoted by Cllr Butland, focusing on a long-term housing strategy by concentrating on new settlements is not working. They've lost focus on the 5-year land supply putting the whole district at risk from developers.

4. Uttlesford District Council

Uttlesford is a very different proposition. UDC have their 5-year land supply in place but from what we've seen of their Local Plan process, it seems to be in a bit of a mess

SERCLE are currently conducting a detailed assessment of UDC's Local Plan process using the government guidelines as a benchmark. Our preliminary results will be issued in the New Year.

- **UDC Meetings**

If anyone has been watching or attending the UDC Local Plan working group meetings, you'll have seen SERCLE using the public session to raise our concerns. Councillors are also raising the issue about the availability of evidence. Cllr Barker has

constantly re-iterated significant evidence is available on the internet. SERCLE have conducted a review of the evidence on the web page. Our initial conclusion – the evidence is either out of date, not relevant to the West of Braintree new town or contradicts other evidence.

- **UDC Press Release**



Recently UDC issued a press article, which was quickly retracted. This stated that UDC had selected two new settlements; both in the South. One at Easton Park

and the other at West of Braintree. Whatever the reason, the article was subsequently pulled and the decision denied but egg still remains on the face of the council.

SERCLE have read and heard several different reasons for the action. One was by Cllr Ranger in the Dunmow Town Hall meeting dated 20th October 2016. In the minutes is the statement: *“UDC has a duty of co-operation with neighbouring authorities (E. Herts, Harlow, Epping, S. Cambs and Braintree). S Cambs objected to the Great Chesterford site as it affects their local plan”*

In subsequent UDC meetings Cllr Barker has been at pains to inform the public that no council can object to another council's Local Plan.

Worst still information has been obtained from South Cambridgeshire District Council through the Freedom of Information that seems to tell another story i.e. they didn't object and made positive overtures to talk to Uttlesford. Let's see how this one pans out however we suspect the truth will never be told.

As a final point, we're not giving up! The fight is on and your support is invaluable!

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