



**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL (LARGE HALL)
ON TUESDAY 20th OCTOBER 2026 AT 7.00 PM**

26/110 Apologies for Absence- Apologies were received from Cllr Laurence Hull which were accepted.

26/111 Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting- The minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2026 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

26/112 Declarations of Interest (existence and nature)

There were no declarations of interest with regards to items on the Agenda.

26/113 Essex County Councillor (ECC) Update

Councillor Isi Rocha sent apologies. A report was read out on her behalf. It included updates on the following:

Essex County Council Locality Fund- Each County Councillor has £10,000 available to support community-focused projects within their division. Applications are to be made through the relevant parish council. Councillor Rocha encouraged local groups and organisations to identify suitable projects and submit proposals for consideration.

Station Road Development- The deadline for representations on the proposed Station Road development was 21st October 2026. Councillor Rocha was finalising her response and encouraged residents to submit comments before the deadline.

Tree Protection Order- The provisional Tree Preservation Order relating to land behind Woodpeckers remained in place until 5 February 2027.

Braintree District Local Plan- I was noted that the Regulation 19 consultation was underway. Residents were encouraged to submit comments through the consultation portal.

Station Road highways concerns- Councillor Rocha had taken photographs and videos of the road conditions and requested a highways surgery meeting with Cllr Webster and the relevant highways representatives. She had also raised a residents' petition and other concerns relating to Station Road.

Stonebridge, Earls Colne- Piling works had been completed, and preparations were underway for a temporary road on the western side of the bridge to facilitate works on the eastern side. Councillor Roca intended to revisit the site and share photographs and videos.

Youth provision- Funding had been arranged for a youth group in Earls Colne. Work was continuing with Vicky Faulks to establish the provision in the coming months.

Other community and highways matters- Councillor Rocha continued to pursue concerns relating to Massingham Drive, the reported bin-related issues, disabled parking on the High Street, speeding and roadworks.

The report was noted, and can be found in Appendix 1.

26/114 Braintree District Councillor (BDC) Update

Councillor Gabrielle Spray was in attendance and provided an update on the following matters:

Braintree District Local Plan- The Council was advised that the Local Plan had progressed to Regulation 19 following a meeting of Braintree District Council on 21st September 2026. The six-week consultation was in progress, with approximately two weeks remaining at the time of the meeting. The consultation focused on whether the Plan had been prepared in accordance with the relevant legal requirements and whether it was sound. It was not intended as a further opportunity to propose new development sites. The next anticipated stage was for Braintree District Council to consider the final draft in December, with submission to the Planning Inspectorate required by 31st December 2026. Examination is expected during 2027.

Planning enforcement- An updated planning enforcement plan had been approved by Braintree District Council's Cabinet on 28th September 2026. The Council was encouraged to consult the document, which explained what constituted a potential planning breach, how concerns could be reported and the process and timescales for investigating complaints.

Climate change event- Councillor Spray reported on a community screening held on 7th October, which explored the effects of climate change, including flooding and wildfires. The event was well attended and had encouraged discussion about climate change and possible responses.

District Council budget- Budget discussions for 2026/27 were underway. The district council was seeking to support residents while maintaining a balanced budget and financial sustainability.

Community funding- An additional £1,500 was available to each of the relevant District Councillors for community projects, following the expenditure of the initial £1,500 allocation. Applications could support existing or new community initiatives and had to meet the applicable criteria. The funding needed to be spent by the end of February 2027. Councillors and community groups were encouraged to contact the district councillors with suitable proposals.

The report was noted, and can be found in Appendix 2.

26/115 National Highways Update

The Council welcomed Nigel Allsopp, Route Manager for Essex, and Luke Doughty, Project Manager for Scheme Delivery, from National Highways. The representatives explained their respective roles, including longer-term planning of the strategic road network, programme development, scheme delivery and engagement with local councils and communities.

Planning and communication of roadworks- National Highways explained that road closures and major works required coordination with other highway authorities to minimise clashes and disruption. Planning and notification periods varied according to the scale and urgency of the works. The representatives advised that parish councils should be included on the relevant stakeholder communication lists so that information about planned works, closures, diversions and access arrangements could be shared with residents.

The Council asked how updates would be communicated and how much notice could be expected. National Highways explained that the notice period depended on the type and scale of the works, with more significant schemes requiring earlier engagement. Emergency and reactive works could have shorter notification periods. The representatives welcomed feedback from the Council and residents and encouraged the Council to report redundant or incorrectly positioned temporary signage.

A120 resurfacing- The Council was advised of planned resurfacing works on the A120 between Marks Tey and the wider route towards Braintree. Works were expected to commence on 9th November 2026, subject to confirmation of the relevant programme. Diversion arrangements and access for residents were noted, highlighting the potential impact of closures on local communities.

A120 junction concerns- The Council raised serious concerns about the junction serving Coggeshall, including reported accidents, vehicle speeds, difficulties crossing the carriageway and the risk posed by heavy goods vehicles. Councillors expressed concern that the existing junction layout was unsafe and requested that National Highways review the arrangements. National Highways acknowledged the concerns and confirmed that the junction was on its list for consideration however commitment to a particular alteration or timescale was made at the meeting.

Wider highways infrastructure- The discussion included the impact of development on the local road network, the need for adequate highway infrastructure alongside new housing, and concerns about the withdrawal of funding for previously proposed improvements. The representatives explained that future investment would need to be considered alongside existing maintenance requirements and available budgets.

The Council thanked the National Highways representatives for attending and providing the update.

26/116 Public Participation session

Planning enforcement concern- A resident raised concerns about works being undertaken at a development site, including the removal of trees and alleged departures from the approved planning arrangements. The resident stated that works had previously been challenged and questioned whether further work was authorised. The resident had contacted the relevant authorities and requested clarification about how the matter could be escalated.

The Council discussed the possibility of contacting the relevant planning enforcement officers and seeking assistance from the County Councillor.

Action: *The Clerk to write to Braintree District Council seeking an update on the reported works and the status of the relevant planning enforcement investigation.*

Request for a meeting with the Chairman- A resident raised concerns that previous emails requesting a meeting had not received a response.

The Chairman apologised and explained that the emails had been directed to the junk folder. The Chairman agreed to make contact with the resident to arrange a discussion.

Action: *The Clerk to make contact the resident to arrange a meeting.*

Public acknowledgement of the Council work- A member of the public thanked Councillor Dennis for the work undertaken on the Regulation 19 Local Plan response, the supporting research and the Clerk's development of improved council processes and communications.

The Council noted the comments.

26/117 Chairman's Update

The Chairman reported that the transition between the outgoing Clerk and the new Clerk had taken place on 7th and 8th October respectively, with minimal disruption.

The Chairman welcomed the new Clerk's ideas for improving council operations and communications.

The Chairman also reported on the recent Planning Committee meeting, noting the importance of maintaining orderly debate and adhering to the Council's Standing Orders.

The establishment of the working groups was progressing, with members and leads being organised and meetings expected to take place shortly.

The report was noted.

26/118 Clerk's Update

Handover and administration- The handover from the previous Clerk remained a principal focus. The Clerk was familiarising herself with the Council's software and administrative arrangements.

Village Hall management- The Clerk was working with the Village Hall Working Group to identify priorities following the health and safety assessment and fire risk assessment.

The fire risk assessment had identified the fuse board at the top of the chambers as a priority because of the potential obstruction to the escape route in the event of a fire. Remedial works were scheduled to commence the following week.

Communications and community engagement- Work was continuing on the Council's website to help communications and engagement with residents, councillors and working groups long term.

Staff and operational arrangements- The Clerk was working with the community workers to establish clearer work schedules, seasonal tasks and reporting arrangements. A staff WhatsApp group was being used to improve day-to-day communication and reporting of issues.

The report was noted.

26/119 Planning

- (a) The Chair of the Planning Committee reported on the Planning meeting held on 9th October 2026, covering the following-

Station Road Development- It was noted that the Committee had resolved to object to this application and a response had been submitted. The Chair explained how the supporting evidence, including submitted plans, technical reports, consultation responses and residents' representations were taken into consideration.

The principal concerns included:

- Harm to the landscape and village character, including the setting of the conservation area.
- Adverse visual effects and potential conflict with settlement boundary policies.
- Traffic and cumulative highway impacts, including the forecast that the Churchill mini-roundabout could exceed capacity by 2033.
- Pedestrian safety at the proposed informal crossing, with recorded vehicle speeds of approximately 37 mph.
- Conflicting biodiversity figures and insufficiently secured details of off-site provision.
- Sewage treatment capacity, surface water drainage and maintenance arrangements.
- Capacity of education and healthcare provision.
- Potential noise impacts from Riverside Business Park.

The Committee's representations had been prepared with reference to the relevant evidence and planning considerations.

Colne Valley Golf Club application- It was noted that the Committee had resolved to object to this application and a response had been submitted. The Chair explained how the supporting evidence, including submitted plans, technical reports, consultation responses and residents' representations were taken into consideration.

The principal concerns related to:

- Noise and disturbance during evening and night-time periods.
- Guest access and management arrangements.

- Parking capacity.
- Surface water and foul drainage.
- Clarification of club-specific demand and business viability.

The Committee Chair reminded Councillors and residents that the consultation deadlines for both applications. Residents were advised to review the latest documents and submit representations directly to Braintree District Council by the relevant deadline.

(b) The following planning applications, submitted between the publication of the agenda and the date of the meeting, were reviewed:

Application Ref	Site / Address	Proposal	Decision Made
26/02133/TPOCON	37B Park Lane Earls Colne Essex CO6 2RH	Notice of intent to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area - Removal of approximately 6 to 8 fir trees and the remaining redundant oak tree stump to facilitate boundary reinstatement works.	No objection
26/02163/OUT	Land North East Station Road Earls Colne Essex	Outline planning permission with all matters reserved except for Access for the erection of up to 80 dwellings with public open space, landscaping, sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and associated infrastructure and vehicular access point from Station Road.	Objection submitted
26/02289/TPOCON	8 High Street Earls Colne Essex CO6 2PA	Notice of intent to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area - Plum tree request to reduce spread by 2 meters and height reduction by 2.5 meters.	No objection
26/02237/DAC	50 Park Lane Earls Colne Essex CO6 2RH	Discharge of condition 3 (Method Statement) of 23/01118/HH	Objection
26/02206/TPO	91 High Street Earls Colne Essex CO6 2QX	Application to carry out works to trees protected by Tree Preservation Order: 14/06 T1 - Eucalyptus to re-pollard back by 6 metres to previous cuts. Reason: due to the trees proximity to the house, also it is overhanging the public footpath	No objection
26/02267/TPOCON	Grammar School House York Road Earls Colne Essex CO6 2RN	Notice of intent to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area: 3 No. Apple trees - 1m crown reduction & a 1m clearance away from wall to remove all encroachment into neighbouring property.	No objection
26/02302/TPOCON	14 Lower Holt Street Earls Colne Essex CO6 2PH	Notice of intent to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area: Magnolia- Crown reduction by approximately 2m to improve shape	No objection

26/02195/FUL	31 Coggeshall Road Earls Colne Essex CO6 2JR	Proposed 1 No. dwelling, creation of shared access, associated parking, private amenity space, landscaping, boundary treatments with associated works	Deferred with extension requested- to be discussed at next full council meeting
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- (c) **Planning Working Group Terms of Reference-** The Council considered the draft Terms of Reference for the Planning Working Group.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Dennis to clarify the procedure for planning applications where the consultation deadline fell before the next scheduled Council meeting. The amendment provided that the Planning Working Group would make recommendations to the Parish Council and that, where necessary, the Clerk could determine and submit a response within the scope of existing approved delegated authority. Any matters falling outside that authority would be referred to the Planning Committee.

The amendment was agreed by Full Council. The amended Terms of Reference were then considered, and it was resolved to approve the Planning Working Group Terms of Reference as amended.

- (d) **Regulation 19 Consultation-** The response to the Regulation 19 consultation on the Braintree District Local Plan **was resolved** for submission.

Action: Clerk to type up full response and submit before the deadline of 6th November. See Appendix 3..

- (e) **Further items for discussion-** None.

26/120 Village Hall

- (a) The Council received an update on outstanding matters related to the management of the Village Hall and related Facilities from Councillor Cook. The report was noted.
- (b) The Terms of Reference for the VH Working Group **were resolved** with no amendments.
- (c) The Council considered a request from Earls Colne Museum to hire the small hall during renovation works at the museum. **It was agreed in principle** to the museum hiring the small hall during the renovation period, with any associated financial arrangements to be considered separately.

(a) Further Items for Discussion

The Council discussed outstanding grant-funded works and the need to obtain confirmed quotations by the end of November.

Action: The VH Working Group to prepare a proposal for the use of the remaining £12,421 Enovert grant funding for submission to Full Council for approval at the next meeting. Enovert has confirmed that the funding deadline has been extended to the end of November. Following Council approval, the relevant quotations are to be submitted to Enovert, with works to commence once the necessary approvals are in place.

26/121 Finance and Internal Controls

- (a) **It was resolved** to approve the accounts for payment as follows:

Staff Salaries	6523.32
HMRC	2136.79
Essex Pension Fund	1119.50
Eco Online	888.00
Siemens	788.22
CouncilWise	420.00
SSE	411.83

Parish Online	302.40
Hall Hire Deposit Refunds	300.00
British Gas	221.35
Percivals	200.00
Cllr Cook (Expenses)	194.87
Rentokil	104.92
National Allotment Society	85.00
o2 bionic	79.97
Datapartners	74.60
Womens Institute	50.50
Yu Energy	32.84
Essex Supplies	24.88
Unity Trust Bank	12.25

(b) Reallocation of CCTV project budget- The Council considered a proposal to reallocate £946 from the CCTV project budget to cover costs associated with the museum's use of the Village Hall. **This agenda item was moved to confidential discussion.**

(c) The Council received an update from the internal control adviser Councillor Lynham. The following matters were discussed:

Bank mandates: Changes to authorised users had been checked against the banking system. Confirmation of the current authorised signatories from Unity Trust Bank remained outstanding.

Invoice approval: The existing process involved invoices being received and filed, with copies or details provided to the relevant councillors for checking before the Clerk prepared the payment list.

Evidence of approval: The need for a clear documentary record confirming that councillors had reviewed and approved invoices was discussed.

Supporting documentation: The Council discussed the need to ensure that invoices were supported by the relevant orders, quotations and evidence of delivery or completion before payment.

Credit card transactions: The need to clarify the checking and authorisation process for credit card expenditure was also noted.

It was recommended that the Finance and Internal Controls Committee should review the relevant procedures and Terms of Reference to identify gaps and recommend improvements.

The next review would focus on the payment approval process and the relationship between invoice checking, approval of the payment schedule and final authorisation of payments.

Action: *The Finance and Internal Controls Committee to review the financial procedures and Terms of Reference, document the approval process and recommend any necessary amendments.*

26/122 Highways and Facilities

(b) The Council received an update on completed work relating to highways and Council-managed facilities from Councillor Sparks.

It was reported that works were underway at the Stonebridge site and that additional traffic management measures had been introduced at the Station Road junction.

No further update had been received regarding the Council's requests for revised footway signage in Park Lane and disabled parking bays on the High Street.

Some gullies in Halstead Road had been repaired, although one remained outstanding. The hedge in Halford Road had also been cut back, improving pedestrian access along the footway.

The Council noted continuing concerns about pothole repairs and encouraged residents and Councillors to continue reporting defects to Essex County Council.

(d) The Terms of Reference for the HF Working Group **were resolved** with no amendments.

(d) Suspending CCTV Project- The Council considered a proposal to agree whether to suspend the CCTV project for the foreseeable future. **This agenda item was moved to confidential discussion.**

(c) **Further Items for Discussion**

Station Road Speed Limit- The Council discussed the response received from Essex County Council regarding the request to introduce a 30 mph speed limit on Station Road. The response had relied on existing traffic data and did not support further action at that stage.

Councillor Sparks confirmed that they had written to the relevant officer and requested the assistance of the County Councillor in seeking a further review of the road conditions and pedestrian safety concerns. Members agreed that the matter should remain under review and that further engagement with the relevant authorities was necessary.

Action Points: *The Chairman to continue liaising with the relevant Essex County Council officer and County Councillor to seek a further review of the proposed speed limit; The Clerk to monitor progress and report any further responses to the Council.*

Highways Issues- The Council discussed the need to improve the monitoring and tracking of outstanding highways defects and requests. Issues identified included pavement defects and damaged surfaces, disabled parking bays and associated posts, faded road markings and yellow lines, drainage defects, potholes and outstanding reports recorded on the relevant highways reporting system. Members discussed the benefits of consolidating these issues into a single prioritised list to provide a clearer overview of outstanding matters and support more effective follow-up with the County Councillor and the relevant highways authority.

Action Points: *The HF Working Group to compile a consolidated list of outstanding highways issues, including existing reports and requests- prioritise the issues according to urgency, public safety and the potential impact on residents; Progress to be reported to the Council at a future meeting.*

Community Speed Watch- The Council discussed ongoing concerns about speeding along Station Road and the High Street. The Chairman noted that the Council had previously sought volunteers to re-establish the Community Speed Watch scheme but had received insufficient interest.

Members considered whether the scheme could be re-established and whether working jointly with neighbouring parishes might provide a more practical way forward by sharing volunteers and resources. It was agreed that further information was required regarding the scheme's requirements, suitable monitoring locations and relevant safety considerations.

Action Points: *The Clerk and HF Working Group to investigate the requirements for re-establishing Community Speed Watch, including volunteer numbers, training and operational arrangements; Explore monitoring locations along Station Road and the High Street, subject to the relevant safety requirements and approvals; Findings and recommendations to be presented to the Council for further consideration.*

26/123 Village Environment

(a) The Council received an update on completed work relating to Council-managed open spaces-

Dog Poo Bins- The Clerk reported that Braintree District Council had confirmed that the requested dog-bin replacements around the village had been completed.

Action Point- A member of the VE Working Group to undertake a walk-round assessment of the dog poo bins following completion of the project, confirming their condition, suitability and any outstanding issues.

Memorial Bench Request- The Clerk had received a request for the Council to install a memorial bench in memory of their late husband. The Council discussed the need to identify a suitable location, confirm ownership of the proposed site and establish whether planning permission or any other approvals would be required.

Action Point- The Clerk to confirm any necessary permissions, obtain quotations and investigate whether Section 106 funding may be available, liaising with the Section 106 Working Group as appropriate. The proposed location and costs to be presented to Council for consideration at the next meeting.

Community Workers- The Clerk was also working with the community workers to establish clearer seasonal work schedules, priorities and reporting arrangements.

Action Point- The Clerk to provide an update at the next meeting.

(b) The Terms of Reference for the VE Working Group **were resolved** with no amendments.

(c) **Further items for discussion**

Hobbs Way – The Clerk reported that concerns had been raised regarding rubbish caught in the hedges at Hobbs Way. It was also noted that a number of trees had previously been identified by the former Tree Warden as requiring assessment, and an update on the outstanding tree survey was needed.

Action Point: The Clerk to contact Eastlight to report the rubbish in the hedges at Hobbs Way and to follow up on the outstanding tree survey, reporting back to the Council on progress.

26/124 Section 106

(a) Recent Applications: The Clerk reported that the two applications previously approved by the Council had been submitted to Braintree District Council. No response had yet been received.

(d) The Terms of Reference for the s106 Working Group **were resolved** with no amendments.

(a) **Further items for discussion**

Mary Gee Green - The Council discussed the need to revisit the previous proposal for works at Mary Gee Green and review the available quotations to determine the most appropriate way forward.

Action Point: The s106 Working Group to revisit the proposal for Mary Gee Green, review the existing quotations and, where appropriate, arrange for the works to be put out to tender.

Replacement of Litter Bins- The Council discussed the previous proposal for replacement litter bins and the need to establish which bins require replacing, together with the overall cost of the proposed replacements.

Action Point: The S106 Working Group to review the previous litter bin proposal, identify all bins requiring replacement and prepare a comprehensive proposal, including total costings, for consideration at the next Full Council meeting.

26/125 Community Engagement and Events

(a) The Council received an update on communications and forthcoming events-

Earls Colne Christmas Event- The Council discussed arrangements for the forthcoming Christmas event, provisionally planned for Saturday 12th December 2026. The Clerk confirmed that Village Hall had been reserved for the event. Arrangements for children's activities, decorations and support from the community workers were discussed. The Council noted that further coordination was required with the relevant community organisations, including the Horticultural Society.

Action Point: Lead members of CEE Working Group to liaise with the relevant community organisations, including the Horticultural Society to co-ordinate arrangements. A update to be given at the next meeting.

(b) The Terms of Reference for the CEE Working Group **were resolved** with no amendments.

(a) **Further Items for discussion**

Councillor Surgeries- Councillor Sparks introduced an idea for the previously agreed councillor surgeries to be held before ordinary Council meetings, potentially between 6.00 pm and 7.00 pm. The purpose would be to provide residents with an informal opportunity to raise concerns with parish councillors and, where possible, county and district councillors. Further discussions would be required to establish the format, frequency, attendance arrangements and process for recording and referring issues to the Council.

Action Point: *The CEE Working Group to explore the proposal and bring forward recommendations for consideration at a future meeting.*

26/126 St Andrew's Church Clock- The Council received an update from the Church Clock Liaison Councillor Cook. It was noted that there was a requirement for additional components for the clock mechanism and that a component had failed. It was recommended purchasing replacement components for all three mechanisms to allow the necessary repair work to be undertaken. The cost was stated to be approximately £150 in total, subject to confirmation. The Council also discussed the condition of the associated bell-handling mechanisms and whether further work should be planned for a future financial year. The Clerk requested that the supporting details be provided so that the purchase could be progressed through the Council's existing financial procedures.

Action Point: *Councillor Cook to provide the Clerk with the details and cost of the required components to be considered at the next Finance and Internal Controls Committee Meeting.*

26/127 General Information- No further discussions.

26/128 Confidential Matters

- (a) Under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1(2), **it was resolved** to exclude members of the press and public for the duration of this meeting to consider the following confidential employment items:
- (b) **War Memorial-** The Council considered a request for two individuals who served in the Armed Forces and lost their lives during a wartime incident at a church service in London to be commemorated on the Village War Memorial. **It was resolved** to accept the quotation of £460.32 for the supply and installation of both commemorative plaques.
- (c) **Earls Colne Museum: Transfer of Assets-** The Council considered the outstanding transfer documentation between Earls Colne Parish Council and Earls Colne Heritage Museum. It was explained that the transfer had previously been discussed and agreed in principle, but the transfer deed had not been signed, leaving the matter incomplete. The Clerk presented a report containing background information and supporting documents. **It was resolved** to sign the transfer documentation, subject to completion of the required signatures.
- (d) **Earls Colne Heritage Museum: Village Hall Hire and Associated Costs-** The Council considered a proposal concerning the Museum's use of the village hall and the associated costs. The proposed arrangement would provide the Museum with one four-hour session per month, between 12 noon and 4.00 pm, allowing time for setting up and clearing away. **It was resolved** to provide the Museum with the monthly hall booking at no hire charge, subject to the Museum contributing £490 per year towards heating and associated costs.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Councillor Isi Rocha, Essex County Council Report- October 2026

Appendix 2: Councillor Gabrielle Spray, Braintree District Council Report, October 2026

Appendix 3: Regulation 19 Draft Response, approved.

Councillor Isi Rocha, Essex County Council Report- October 2026

Good evening everyone,

Please accept my sincere apologies at not being able to attend tonight however here's my October update.

ECC Locality Fund: I just wanted to remind residents about the ECC Locality Fund where each County Councillor has £10,000 to share on community focused projects across each division. It is open to local groups and projects and need to be applied for through your local parish council. I had sent information to all councils in the Halstead Division earlier on this year and have only received one community project request from Colne Engaine. I am mentioning this because I would like each Parish Council to review each application and decide which one they would like to put forward as a share of the £10,000. I would like this to be community led first and foremost which is why I've taken this approach.

Planning: The deadline for the station road proposed development is 21st October and I am in the process of finalising my response to the plan. I'd strongly encourage residents who haven't yet submitted their comments to do so before tomorrow. In addition to that, Planning have advised me that the provisional tree protection order for the land at the back of Woodpeckers remains in place up until the 5th of February 2027. Finally, we are now in Regulation 19 of Braintree's local Plan so again, so please do take the time to share your thoughts online regarding the proposals put forward by Braintree. Although what we can comment on is narrower, it is still worth sharing your feedback on the portal as it will all be reviewed.

Station Road: I understand how disappointed and frustrated residents will be in reference to Station Road re-surfacing that didn't happen. I have been to take videos and photos and have requested a highways surgery meeting with Cllr Webster and Highways to discuss this. It is simply not good enough and the issues on this road need to be addressed asap. I have also been copied in on an email from a local resident regarding a petition and a number of other items about Station Road today. I have also requested that these are addressed in the same Highways surgery meeting. I will let you all know once that date has been confirmed.

StoneBridge, Earls Colne: I'm sure you're all aware but I visited this site on 19th October to see what works were being performed. Piling has been completed and they are now working on getting the temporary road in place on the west side so they can start works on the east side of the bridge. It was very interesting to see the scale of site and the works involved so I have asked if I can re-visit the site at a later date once works are started on the East Side. I will share any photos and videos that I make with Millenium Green as well as on my socials.

Community matters: As I'm sure you're all aware, I've arranged funding for a youth group for Earls Colne so am excited to move this forward with Vicky so we can get this up and running in the next couple of months. It would be great to have something in place now that the nights are drawing in. I continue to chase up on the issues with the roads including Massingham Drive scheduled to be repaired Mid-November, #bingate issues raised by local residents, the disabled parking space on the high street as well as concerns from local business owners regarding the high street speeding and roadworks planning.

As ever, if you need any help or support, please feel free to email me on cllr.isi.rocha@essex.gov.uk

REPORT FOR THE COLNES PARISH COUNCILS OCTOBER 2026

LOCAL PLAN: An Extraordinary meeting of BDC's Full Council was held on 21st September with one item on the agenda: to ask Council to approve the draft Local Plan to go forward to Regulation 19 consultation. I presented the report and update on the Plan's progress, and I am pleased to say that, following Council's vote to move forward, the 6-week Reg 19 public consultation started on 23rd September. This is the final opportunity for residents to comment on the Local Plan before it is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by 31st December. Regulation 19 differs from previous consultations in that it is about whether the Council has followed due process in producing the Plan, has consulted correctly with all parties and is the Plan 'sound'. It is not an opportunity to comment on specific sites or introduce new sites. I would encourage all residents with an interest in how our District develops up to 2043 to look at the Plan and add a comment on the 'soundness' of the Plan. There is advice as to how to do this, and plenty of information, on the BDC website <https://www.braintree.gov.uk> All comments will be sent directly to the Planning Inspectorate together with the draft Plan, in time for the examination by an independent Inspector in 2027.

ENFORCEMENT PLAN: An updated version of the Enforcement Plan was approved by the Council's Cabinet on 28th September. This document clearly sets out what Planning Enforcement is, how it may be applied and the steps taken by Officers when a breach of planning is reported. A copy of the Enforcement plan can be found on the Council's website and I believe it will be of great help in explaining what can be a complex subject.

CLIMATE CHANGE: On 7th October I attended the Peoples' Emergency Briefing at St Andrew's Church in Earls Colne. There was a great turnout of about 100 people to watch the film, presented by Chris Packham, showing how climate change is affecting our country and way of life. Following the film, there was a Q and A session with four panel members, one of whom was my Cabinet colleague Cllr Peter Schwier who has considerable experience of environmental matters. This was a very informative evening with, I might add, a wake-up call for us all on how the extremes of weather we witnessed this summer with drought, wildfires and floods can affect all of us.

BUDGETS: It is that time of year when all Councils, whether Parish, District or County, start the serious discussions on their budgets for 2026/27. As always, there will be some difficult decisions to be made but Braintree District Council will make every effort to support our residents as much as possible whilst remaining a financially responsible authority.

District Councillors Grant: One piece of good news is that the Councillors Grant Fund for this year has been given a boost and a further £1500 is available for local projects. This only applies if the first £1500 has been fully allocated and it needs to be spent by end of February 2027. As my first grant fund has already been spent, this means I have another £1500 to give away. Please email me with any proposals! cllr.gspray@braintree.gov.uk

Best regards

Gabrielle

Cllr Gabrielle Spray

The Colnes Ward

Earls Colne Parish Council

Braintree District Local Plan 2043 – Regulation 19 Response

Earls Colne Parish Council has considered the Regulation 19 Submission Draft against legal compliance and the four tests of soundness: whether the Plan is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Our concerns are based largely on Braintree District Council's own published evidence and whether that evidence fully supports the strategy now proposed.

Legal Compliance

ECPC has not at this stage identified a definitive failure of legal compliance.

However, we have concerns about whether the evidence base was sufficiently complete when the Regulation 19 Plan was approved for consultation.

We recognise that BDC has undertaken Regulation 18 consultation and has published the main documents expected at Regulation 19, including the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

However, BDC's Regulation 19 Transport Evidence is dated the 14th September 2026 and is itself described as a "Consultation draft" and a "Draft for Local Plan evidence base". This was only days before the Local Plan Sub-Committee considered the Submission Draft on the 17th September and Full Council approved it on the 21st September.

This does not automatically make the Plan unlawful. However, given that Regulation 19 is intended to be the Plan which the authority considers ready to submit for examination, ECPC considers that the status and timing of this evidence require explanation.

Positively Prepared

BDC has sought to meet its identified housing requirement, and ECPC accepts that this supports the Plan in terms of meeting development need.

Our concern is whether the location and scale of that growth can actually be accommodated sustainably.

BDC's own Regulation 19 Transport Evidence – dated the 14th September 2026 identifies increased traffic from Local Plan growth on the A1124 east of Halstead. Earls Colne lies directly on this corridor.

This means that development taking place outside Earls Colne can still have a significant effect on the village.

BDC's September 2026 Infrastructure Delivery Plan (REBT005) also identifies infrastructure which remains dependent upon future funding, land, route confirmation and other delivery arrangements.

ECPC therefore considers that meeting a housing number alone is not enough. The Plan also needs to show that the growth proposed can be supported by the infrastructure needed to accommodate it.

Justified

BDC has undertaken a Regulation 19 Sustainability Appraisal (REBR004), dated September 2026, which considers alternative development strategies.

However, the Sustainability Appraisal (September 2026) also identifies adverse effects associated with parts of the preferred strategy.

BDC's transport evidence also identifies increased traffic on the A1124 east of Halstead.

The issue for ECPC is therefore not whether alternatives have been considered — they have — but whether BDC has clearly demonstrated why the chosen strategy remains the most appropriate one where its own evidence identifies disadvantages and additional infrastructure pressures.

Where a strategy has significant adverse effects, there needs to be a clear evidence-based reason for choosing it over reasonable alternatives.

ECPC considers that this justification needs to be particularly clear where major growth is proposed which will affect existing communities outside the development area itself.

Effective

This is ECPC's main soundness concern.

BDC's own evidence shows that Local Plan growth will increase traffic on the A1124 east of Halstead and that infrastructure and mitigation will be needed.

Of particular concern is the proposed Halstead Link Road.

BDC's Regulation 19 Transport Evidence describes the Link Road as being required to mitigate increased traffic through Halstead arising from background growth and planned development. It goes further and states that the scheme is "essential for delivering the larger development sites in Halstead" and is expected to be funded entirely by the site developers.

The Link Road is also one of only three key highway mitigation schemes included in the Regulation 19 Scenario 3 transport modelling.

The September 2026 Sustainability Appraisal similarly states that the Link Road is expected to be delivered "at an early stage of the development."

However, BDC's September 2026 Infrastructure Delivery Plan records the A131 Halstead Relief Road / Link Road as a "Post-2043 / Longer term" project. It gives an estimated cost of £39 million, records a Local Plan site contribution to 2043 of £0, and states that the future strategic case, feasibility, funding and development requirements are still to be determined.

ECPC considers that this apparent inconsistency requires clarification. If the Link Road is essential to delivering the larger Halstead developments and forms part of the mitigation used to demonstrate that Local Plan growth can be accommodated, it is difficult to understand how the same scheme can be identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan as a longer-term project beyond 2043 with no Local Plan site contribution identified within the Plan period.

This is important because identifying mitigation is not the same as demonstrating that it will actually be delivered.

ECPC therefore has a significant concern that parts of the proposed growth strategy rely on infrastructure and mitigation which have not yet been shown to be sufficiently certain or deliverable to demonstrate that the Plan is effective.

Consistent with National Policy

National planning policy requires Local Plans to support sustainable development and properly consider strategic and cumulative impacts.

BDC's own evidence confirms increased traffic on the A1124 east of Halstead because of Local Plan development.

This is therefore a strategic Local Plan issue, rather than simply something that should be dealt with later through individual planning applications.

The same applies to infrastructure. Where BDC's own evidence identifies infrastructure as necessary to support growth, but funding, land or delivery arrangements remain unresolved, ECPC questions whether the Plan provides sufficient certainty that development will be sustainable.

The Local Plan should identify the strategic mitigation required and establish a credible delivery framework. Individual applications may secure contributions and implementation, but should not be relied upon to resolve an unidentified or uncoded strategic mitigation requirement.

ECPC therefore considers there is a soundness concern where BDC's own evidence identifies cumulative impacts, but the necessary mitigation has not yet been shown to be deliverable.

Overall Position

ECPC has not identified a definitive failure of legal compliance. Its objection concerns soundness, principally whether the proposed growth strategy is effective and deliverable.

However, based on BDC's own evidence, ECPC considers that questions remain regarding the completeness and timing of the Regulation 19 evidence base, and we are not satisfied that all four tests of soundness have yet been demonstrated in full.

Our principal concerns are:

- **Legal compliance:** ECPC has not identified a definitive failure of legal compliance, but considers that the draft status and timing of important Regulation 19 technical evidence require explanation.
- **Positively prepared:** BDC's own evidence shows that the proposed growth will create additional pressure on the A1124 and other infrastructure.

- **Justified:** where BDC's preferred strategy creates identified adverse effects, the reasons for choosing it over reasonable alternatives must be clearly evidenced.
- **Effective:** this is ECPC's strongest concern. The Regulation 19 Transport Evidence describes the Halstead Link Road as essential to delivering the larger development sites in Halstead and includes it within the transport mitigation, while the Sustainability Appraisal expects it to be delivered at an early stage of development. However, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan records the scheme as post-2043, with an estimated cost of £39 million, no Local Plan site contribution identified to 2043, and future feasibility, funding and development requirements still to be determined.
- **Consistent with national policy:** cumulative strategic impacts should be addressed through the Local Plan and not simply left to future individual planning applications.

ECPC objects to the Regulation 19 Submission Draft on grounds of soundness, principally effectiveness. BDC's own evidence describes the Link Road as essential and anticipates its early delivery, while its Infrastructure Delivery Plan places it beyond 2043 with funding and feasibility unresolved. That apparent contradiction goes to the credibility of the growth strategy itself. **Infrastructure cannot be treated as certain when justifying development, then uncertain when accounting for its delivery.**

Principal evidence relied upon

- Braintree District Local Plan 2043 – Regulation 19 Submission Draft
- Braintree Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal – Regulation 19: September 2026 (REBR004)
- Braintree Local Plan Review Regulation 19 Transport Evidence, dated the 14th September 2026 (REBT004)
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan: September 2026 (REBT005)
- National Planning Policy Framework applicable to the examination of the Plan
- Planning Inspectorate, *Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations*, updated on the 20th August 2026