

BOWERS GIFFORD & NORTH BENFLEET NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



DRAFT PRE-SUBMISSION PLAN POLICIES

Published by Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Parish Council under the EU Directive 2001/42 on Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004 to accompany the publication of the Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan for consultation

September 2020

BOWERS GIFFORD & NORTH BENFLEET NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

DRAFT PRE-SUBMISSION PLAN POLICIES

SEPTEMBER 2020

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Policy Maps: North and South [TO BE REVISED]

VISION:

'One Village'

OBJECTIVES:

1. combine and extend the settlements of Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet to create a single, sustainable village inset from the Green Belt
2. deliver a wide range of plots for new homes of all types and tenures, suited to large and small house builders
3. deliver new shops and services, a primary school, a health centre and a country park with access for all
4. protect and improve important green spaces for biodiversity value and rural character
5. reduce the effects of traffic on Pound Lane on safety, air quality and congestion
6. make it easy to walk and cycle around and out of the new village and improve local bus services

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY & MASTERPLAN

Meeting the requirement of Local Plan policies SD2 and SD3 for the Parish presents fundamental spatial planning challenges for the Neighbourhood Plan. By 2034, the Parish will more than double in its housing stock and population and require a significant improvement in local infrastructure capacity. There is also the proposed major extension to the Burnt Mills Industrial Estate at Bradfields Farm on the northern edge of the Parish and only a short distance away at Pitsea and Eversley the Local Plan proposes another 650 homes and new education and leisure provision.

From the earliest stages of the Local Plan, the local community of the Parish were concerned about the threat of the village merging into the urban area of Basildon. The village – Bowers Gifford and the North Benfleet Plotlands – has a very distinct history, character and appearance that are very different to the rest of the neighbouring town. In planning major developments, the community also perceived a big risk in the ‘new’ not integrating with ‘old’, resulting in two or more separate communities of ‘us and them’.

At the same time, many wanted to find ways of better integrating the Plotlands into the village. Its history and Green Belt status had resulted in it feeling different to the main village and had led to too much poor quality, unauthorised development over the years. The Parish Council vision was simple – ‘One Village’ – to capture very succinctly the desired outcome of the Plan and this has tested well with a majority of the community.

This vision has driven the development strategy of the Neighbourhood Plan. In addition to the normal technical considerations in the site assessment process, it was crucial to determine how each available site may contribute to or hinder the vision in spatial planning terms. As a consequence, the strategy has looked to create a single ‘new village’, working with the legacy of the established settlement along Pound Lane, but also parts of London Road and Burnt Mills Road. There is no ‘village centre’ as such; rather, Pound Lane forms a backbone of housing as well as a small number of retail and other commercial and community uses. Its school - St. Margaret’s Primary School – lies on its southernmost edge on London Road, together with the Parish allotments.

Fortunately, the land made available by owners/developers for consideration has enabled this fundamental element of the strategy to be achieved in a way that does not compromise the separate identity of the new village set within the Green Belt. The strategy has also accommodated the flood risk and landscape constraints and, with the agreement of the main developers, made provision for new commercial and community services at different locations along Pound Lane. The new school and community facility in the south west corner of the Hall Farm site on Pound Lane will lie within walking distance of the vast majority of most villagers with improvements to Pound Lane and a Green Ring encouraging safe and convenient walking and cycling routes throughout the village.

The strategy reviewed the earlier Local Plan proposals for a much larger area of development to the west of the village and for a new bus road to connect Pound Lane with Eversley. The Green Belt Review revisited the evidence of the Borough Council’s various reports on the Green Belt in considering the effects of development on the openness of the gap between the village and Pitsea/Eversley from London Road north towards Burnt Mill Road. It concluded that the potential for the effective coalescence of the village with Basildon was too great and that there were other parts of the Green Belt to the east and south of the village whose openness was not as essential to serving its purposes. It identified that the development of a smaller area on the edge of the gap at Little Chalvedon Hall did not pose this risk.

Importantly, land could also provide the opportunity to secure a viable alternative to the bus road by creating one or two new footpath and cycleway routes across the gap to the new community uses at Eversley. Delivering the bus road would require the purchase and reuse of land on Pound Lane that has been assessed as being suitable for housing development and its relative benefits appear uncertain. Other existing roads can be used for new bus services and the alternative routes are considered more direct in linking the village to them and will have far less of an urbanising effect in a precious, narrow part of the gap.

Aside from the sites allocated on each edge of the village, the strategy depends on windfall schemes coming forward in the current Plotlands. Working with plot owners, the Parish Council has assessed that more than 70 plots and currently landlocked land outside the flood risk zone are suitable in principle for housing development in addition to Smilers Farm. In applying the draft Design Code for the new village, it is estimated this land has the potential to deliver at least 300 new homes and probably many more than that if some owners are willing and able to collaborate to unlock and assemble land. Crucial to this strategy, however, is the release of the Plotlands from the Green Belt to allow for more a permissive policy framework (as per the rest of the village), managed and incentivised by a Design Code and Neighbourhood Development Order.

In conclusion, the Parish Council considers the strategy to be the full size of the new village. The major physical and environmental constraints prevent the village growing any further to the north, east or south. Any future proposals to develop within the remaining gap to the west must acknowledge this will lead to the merger of the village with Basildon and must justify that proposal, not just in Green Belt but also in community identity and cohesion terms.

DESIGN STRATEGY

The context for design in the village is very strong. Its history and evolution over the last century have resulted in a distinct settlement pattern of almost universal character in terms of roads, plots and buildings. Its lower density and layout is very different to the rest of the Borough and urban areas more generally, and is only shared by a small number of the other plotland areas.

Building at more conventional densities using pattern book houses favoured by the major developers is simply not possible without undermining the essence of the village character and will not be supported by the local community. However, there will be occasional opportunities – at key nodes and prominent corner sites for example – to deliver something slightly different (and taller) to help the old and new community to navigate the new village and to deliver a degree of variety into the street scene.

This will be the exception rather than the rule and the site allocation policies and Design Code have been drafted with this in mind. As a result, it is necessary to release a greater area of land from the Green Belt than may have otherwise been the case at higher average densities. The Green Belt Review indicates that this can still be achieved as there is sufficient land that is not essential to preserving the purposes of the Green Belt in the Parish.

LAND USE POLICIES

POLICY BG1 GREEN BELT

The Neighbourhood Plan defines the Green Belt in the Parish on the Policies Map. Proposals for inappropriate development in the Green Belt will be refused unless it can be demonstrated there are very special circumstances.

This policy defines the Green Belt in the Parish on its Policies Map and modifies the Local Plan Policies Map in respect of its Policy GB2. The existing boundary excludes Bowers Gifford from the Green Belt between Pound Lane and Page Road/Homestead Road. The new boundary releases more land from the Green Belt to accommodate the proposed site allocations of Policies BG3 – BG7 that are required to meet the Local Plan Policy SD3 targets. Development in the remaining Green Belt will continue to be managed in line with national and Local Plan policies.

There is no available land that is not currently in the Green Belt to serve this purpose. A separate Green Belt Review report has assessed the site options against the national criteria for releasing land from the Green Belt, with Policy SD3 having already established the exceptional circumstances for doing so.

That report also concluded that the North Benfleet Plotlands may also be released from the Green Belt so that the same approach to design control could be established there that also applies to the rest of the village. This is considered essential if the overall vision of creating 'one village' is to be successful. To ensure that the character of the village is not significantly altered, Policy BG8 proposes a Design Code to operate across the new village.

There are two fundamental outcomes of these decisions. Firstly, they will enable a new village to be created over the next decade comprising Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet with the new schemes stitched into this village to provide a major improvement to the range and capacity of local shops and services.

Secondly, it is considered that the proposals represent the full and final scale of change in the Parish for the next few decades. The removal of land from the Green Belt is considered to be the maximum extent to which this is possible without undermining the essential integrity of the Green Belt and the strategic gap it maintains between the new village and its larger neighbours. Unless and until the Borough Council proposes the merger of Pitsea/Eversley with the village and with South Benfleet, which will continue to be resisted by the local community, there should be no need for any further incremental Green Belt loss.

POLICY BG2 HOUSING SUPPLY

The Neighbourhood Plan makes provision for a total of 1,395 new homes within the plan period comprising:

- ***1095 homes via site allocation policies BG3 – BG7***
- ***300 homes via windfall housing schemes***

The Neighbourhood Plan safeguards land at Hall Farm, as shown on the Policies Map, in order to meet longer-term development needs beyond the plan period. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, the safeguarded land is not allocated for development. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land will only be granted following an update to either the Local Plan or the Neighbourhood Plan.

This policy sets out the full provisions of the Neighbourhood Plan for meeting the strategic requirements of the Local Plan policies SD2 and SD3. They require the Neighbourhood Plan to plan for the delivery of at least 1,350 in the plan period.

The evidence base has demonstrated that there is suitable, available and achievable land adjoining the existing inset village to deliver the large majority of those new homes on greenfield sites by releasing land from the Green Belt. It has also shown that, once released from the Green Belt too, the North Benfleet Plotlands has the potential to deliver at least 300 new homes on more than 70 vacant and underused plots. As it is not practical to allocate each plot for development, the policy makes provision for their potential development as windfall schemes.

YEAR	HOUSING DELIVERY	
	ALLOCATIONS	WINDFALL
2022/23	0	25
2023/24	20	25
2024/25	60	25
2025/26	75	25
2026/27	100	25
2027/28	120	25
2028/29	120	25
2029/30	120	25
2030/31	120	25
2031/32	120	25
2032/33	120	25
2033/34	120	25
TOTALS	1095	300

Table A: Indicative Housing Supply Trajectory

Table A above sets out an indicative trajectory for the delivery of a total of 1,395 homes to 2034. It assumes that, although available to commence within the first five years from the adoption of the Local Plan and making of the Neighbourhood Plan in 2022, the larger sites will take some time to secure full planning consent. Even the smaller sites are not likely to be ready to build out consented schemes until at least a year (2023/24). Thereafter, the ability of the local market to absorb new housing sales in this Parish and close by in Pitsea and

Wickford may constrain annual supply to 120 homes per annum, although this may increase in very healthy market conditions.

Almost all the windfall schemes are on one or two plots in the current Plotlands and the feedback from plot owners during consultations for the Plan indicates a healthy interest in bringing schemes forward as soon as the new policy position for the village is established.

The proposed Neighbourhood Development Order, for minor housing development schemes, is intended not only to incentivise adherence to the Design Code of Policy BG8 but also to stimulate and maintain a steady supply of new homes over the plan period, starting in 2022/23. There are also a small number of suitable housing sites of between 10 – 20 homes in the Plotlands that will bolster this source of supply, along with proposals elsewhere within Bowers Gifford that may deliver net additional homes. As such schemes are suited to self builders and custom builders, and for homes for the families of current owners, they are not likely to be constrained by the market absorption rate.

The policy also makes provision for the safeguarding of land at Hall Farm (Policy BG3) north of the farm buildings to deliver the final phase of development of the new village at some point after 2034. The Green Belt Review report concluded that with the proposed scale of change at Hall Farm and at Bradfields Farm (as per Local Plan Policy E6) opposite on Pound Lane, and with the topography and character of the land, it will no longer contribute to essential openness of the Green Belt and warrants release. However, as shown above, an additional 200 homes are not required by Policy SD3 but the land can be released from the Green Belt now to avoid having to undertake another review in a few years' time.

In accordance with national policy, it makes clear that safeguarded land should not be developed until it is required, but this is kept under review so that it may contribute to meeting housing supply needs during this plan period. The first and subsequent five year reviews of the Neighbourhood Plan will provide that opportunity. However, if the Parish Council chooses not to undertake a timely review, this will be undertaken by the Borough Council in future reviews of its Local Plan.

POLICY BG3 HALL FARM. POUND LANE

The Neighbourhood Plan allocates land at Hall Farm, as shown on the Policies Map, for a residential-led development scheme comprising approx. 650 homes, a 2FE primary school, a local community facility, a country park and a public open space.

Development proposals will be supported provided they:

- *Seek planning consent for the whole scheme in accordance with a masterplan showing the location of the land uses and the layout;*
- *The developable area is confined to land outside the Green Belt as defined by Policy BG1;*
- *Provide for a wide range of home tenures including affordable homes for sale and for self-build plots if there is a demand on the Basildon Self Build Register that has not been met by the Local Plan provisions;*
- *Locate the primary school and the community facility (both with areas of dedicated public car parking) in close proximity to the Pound Lane frontage in the south-west corner of the site only;*
- *Make available the land to Essex County Council to deliver a 2FE primary school within an agreed phasing plan;*
- *Deliver a community facility to the Parish Council within an agreed phasing plan;*
- *Provide vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access from Pound Lane including using the existing North Benfleet Hall Road;*
- *Comprise a layout and arrangement of plots that reflect the character of the adjoining built up area of North Benfleet opposite and to its south, most notably in fronting buildings on to the street in regular north-south and east-west patterns and plot widths and depths;*
- *Comprise a design approach whereby each street has a regular appearance in terms of building line and building form, allowing for a mix of streets that will contain only detached buildings of two or one and a half storeys and bungalows other than on a corner or other prominent plot where a building height of up to two and a half storeys may be justified;*
- *As part of the Green Ring of Policy BG9, they:*
 - *Lay out a new public open space on the Pound Lane frontage to be integral to the flood risk management strategy and to contain biodiversity value;*
 - *Lay out a country park on the non-developable land between the defined developable area and the A130 comprising a mix of recreational, biodiversity, agricultural and other related uses that are deemed appropriate development in the Green Belt;*
 - *Provide amenity land within the developable area in accordance with development plan standards;*
 - *Retain and improve the existing PRoW 146, PRoW 182 and PRoW 150 footpaths and byways and connect them to a new pedestrian and cycle network with connections into the developable area, into the land allocated in Policy BG7 at Alpha Close/Eric Road and into the existing built up area at Clarence Road, Lee Road, and/or Bowers Court Drive and to provide occasional low level lighting for their safe use of a design that minimises their urbanising effect in the Green Belt and potential for light pollution;*
 - *Plant new woodlands on land that will remain in the Green Belt and that is suited to meeting the specification of the Woodland Carbon Code for carbon sequestration purposes; and*

- ***In the event that the PassivHaus Standard is not adopted as per Policy BG14, the buildings optimise their solar access through their orientation and building design.***

This policy allocates land for approx. 650 new homes and other uses on land west and south of Hall Farm (noting that Policy BG2 safeguards land for another 200 new homes on land north of Hall Farm for development beyond 2034). It is the largest of the sites proposed for allocation, making up more than half of the total housing allocation capacity.

The policy defines the developable area on the Policies Map and sets out a series of essential development requirements in terms of the mix of uses, design principles and phasing, and of how its community assets will be delivered and looked after in perpetuity. Given this scale and mix of uses, it requires the provision of a masterplan to be agreed with the Borough Council prior to an outline planning application for the whole scheme being submitted.

An essential feature of the scheme will be the creation of a new country park comprising all of the non-developable land from the farm to the A130 and Rushbottom Lane down to London Road. This will become a significant recreational asset for the local community as part of the Green Ring (Policy BG9), as well continuing to operate a farm shop, some farm working and new woodlands. Its existing PRoW in the Parish area can be supplemented with new footpaths and cycleways to maximise public access from the village and in some places – ideally on the most popular routes – they may require suitable low level lighting for safety but not to the extent that will urbanise the Green Belt. The long term management and operation of the country park will be agreed with the developer and land owner during the masterplanning stage, but the Parish Council is keen to establish a single body for this purpose as outlined in Policy BG9 and in the Implementation section.

The housing scheme will comprise a wide range of types and tenures in line with Local Plan policy. The new primary school (Class F1) and community facility (Class F2) are essential for serving the new village population. The masterplan will consider if and how they may be co-located, along with a potential local centre (see below). It will also set out at what point in the scheme phasing they will be delivered, but it is expected that the new community facility will be delivered in the first phase to act as a hub of new community life, not just for this scheme but for the other schemes in the village. The Parish Council commits to agreeing the specification of the multi-purpose facility with the developer during the masterplanning stage. Both this facility and the school should be located in the south-west corner of the site off Pound Lane so they lie within a reasonable walking distance of the large majority of the population in line with Local Plan Policy HC10.

The scheme may make provision for a local centre comprising a small number and mix of commercial, business and service uses (Class E) to serve the new village. This has not been made a requirement in the policy as two other sites – Little Chalvedon Hall and Smilers Farm – are considered better locations to distribute such uses along Pound Lane. It is unlikely that the new village will be able to sustain a larger number of these uses. However, in the event that one or both sites are not able to deliver those uses within a reasonable timescale the masterplan for this may make such provision.

The developable area avoids that part of the site that lies within Flood Zones 2/3 along parts of Pound Lane. This area is suited to flood risk management, public open space and biodiversity enhancement and should provide a rural setting to much of the development. It will lead into other smaller amenity areas through the development to the country park and will incorporate the school playing field.

Although the developable area does not extend the existing village to the extent of other allocated sites, it is important that the new homes feel and appear as a coherent part of the new village. The Design Strategy is clear that the context for the design of all the new schemes is very strong. This scheme must therefore adhere to those same principles – especially in terms of layout and dominant building forms – although there will be opportunities at key nodal locations within the site to deliver buildings of a form and height that make them more legible.

POLICY BG4 LITTLE CHALVEDON HALL, POUND LANE

The Neighbourhood Plan allocates land at Little Chalvedon Hall, as shown on the Policies Map, for a residential-led development scheme comprising approx. 195 homes, commercial, business and service uses, a hot food takeaway and a public open space.

Development proposals will be supported provided they:

- ***Seek planning consent for the whole scheme in accordance with a masterplan showing the location of the land uses and the layout;***
- ***The developable area is confined to land outside the Green Belt as defined by Policy BG1;***
- ***Provide for a wide range of home tenures including affordable homes for sale;***
- ***Locate all of the small number of new commercial, business and service uses on the Pound Lane frontage only with sufficient public car parking;***
- ***Deliver the commercial, business and service units within an agreed phasing plan;***
- ***Provide a vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access from a single point on Pound Lane with a road arrangement that diverts Pound Lane into the site using a new T junction;***
- ***Comprise a layout and arrangement of plots that reflect the character of the adjoining built up area, most notably in fronting buildings on to the street in regular north-south and east-west patterns and plot widths and depths, with the exception of the Pound Lane frontage, where plot character may differ to allow buildings of a different character to accommodate the commercial, business and service uses with residential apartments above of no more than two and a half storeys;***
- ***Comprise a design approach whereby each street has a regular appearance in terms of building line and building form, allowing for a mix of streets that will contain detached buildings of two storeys or one and a half storeys and bungalows other than on a corner or other prominent plot where a building height of up to two and a half storeys may be justified;***
- ***Make provision in the layout for the potential of future pedestrian and cycleway connectivity with Katherine Road and Westlake Avenue;***
- ***As part of the Green Ring of Policy BG9, they:***
 - ***lay out a new public open space on the Pound Lane frontage to be integral to the flood risk management strategy;***
 - ***Lay out a public open space on land between the defined developable area and Westlake Park with provision for a new pedestrian and cycle access to connect the two parks;***
 - ***Provide amenity land within the developable area in accordance with development plan standards;***
 - ***Plant a new woodland on land that will remain in the Green Belt and that is suited to meeting the specification of the Woodland Carbon Code for carbon sequestration purposes;***

- ***Install new pedestrian and cycleway routes from the developable area to connect with the PRow 143 and with the new development proposed at Pitsea and Eversley (Local Plan Policy H11) and to provide occasional low level lighting for their safe use of a design that minimises their urbanising effect in the Green Belt and potential for light pollution; and***
- ***In the event that the PassivHaus Standard is not adopted as per Policy BG14, the buildings optimise their solar access through their orientation and building design.***

This policy allocates land for approx. 195 new homes and some retail uses on a relatively small part of the much larger farmland that separates the village from Pitsea/Eversley. It is the second largest of the sites proposed for allocation, making up a fifth of the total housing allocation capacity.

The policy defines the developable area on the Policies Map and sets out a series of essential development requirements in terms of the mix of uses, design principles and phasing, and of how its commercial assets will be delivered. Given this scale and mix of uses, it requires the provision of a masterplan to be agreed with the Borough Council prior to an outline planning application for the whole scheme being submitted.

The scheme will enable the diversion of Pound Lane into the site above Homestead Road to create a new T junction, around which a new village green and some shops will be located. This change to the carriageway will play an important role in managing the speed of traffic on Pound Lane as part of the package of measures in Policy BG11.

As with Hall Farm, the site will deliver a wide range of homes and will enable a key part of the Green Ring to be delivered in the open fields that will remain in the Green Belt. The land connects with the Local Plan (Policy H11) proposals immediately outside the Parish boundary at Pitsea/Eversley and, as the land is under the same ownership, it is proposed to put in place two new footpath and cycleway routes across the gap. This will enable residents of the village to access the proposed improved leisure facilities and a new secondary school at Eversley without having to use a car.

The policy includes provision for a small number of commercial units on the Pound Lane frontage. Those units should be used for a mix of uses that now fall within Class E of the Use Classes Order, but must not include an R&D use (formerly B1(b)) or an industrial process (formerly B1(c)), and must include at least one unit for a shop (formerly A1). To ensure that these specific uses are delivered and retained on the site, it is expected that the Borough Council will impose a planning condition restricting their change of use within the new Class E. In addition, a unit may be occupied by a hot food takeaway, as the site is centrally located in the new village and there are no existing takeaways in the village.

The Design Strategy is clear that the context for the design of all the new schemes is very strong. The site is surrounded on three sides by low density plots and building forms that are the essential characteristic of the village. This scheme must therefore adhere to those same principles – especially in terms of layout and dominant building forms – although there will be opportunities at key locations within the site to deliver buildings of a form and height that make them more legible.

POLICY BG5 SMILERS FARM. POUND LANE

The Neighbourhood Plan allocates land at Smiler's Farm, as shown on the Policies Map, for a residential-led development scheme comprising approx. 120 new homes, a GP surgery, a day care facility, commercial, business and service uses and a public open space.

Development proposals will be supported provided they:

- ***Seek planning consent for the whole scheme in accordance with a masterplan showing the location of the land uses and the layout;***
- ***Provide for a wide range of home tenures including affordable homes for sale;***
- ***Confine all residential uses to that part of the site in Flood Zones 1 and 2 and/or to the upper floors of buildings in other ground floor uses in Flood Zone 3, with a flood risk assessment demonstrating how the uses will be made safe for their lifetime taking account of their vulnerability to flood risk events and how the scheme will not increase flood risk elsewhere;***
- ***Locate all of the proposed commercial, business and service uses in Flood Zone 3 and on or towards the Pound Lane frontage with sufficient public car parking;***
- ***Do not include provision for a hot food takeaway within the scheme;***
- ***Use the existing vehicular access of Cat Tree Lane and provide a new vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access on Pound Lane;***
- ***Make provision in the layout for a new road access to adjoining land in the north-west corner of the site and for the potential of future pedestrian and cycleway connectivity with adjoining development schemes at Lower Avenue and at Grange Road;***
- ***Comprise a layout and arrangement of plots that reflect the character of the adjoining built up area, most notably in fronting buildings on to the street in regular north-south and east-west patterns and plot widths and depths, with the exception of the Pound Lane frontage, where plot character may differ to allow buildings of a different character to accommodate the commercial, business and service uses with residential apartments above of no more than two storeys other than on corner or other prominent plots where a building height of up to two and a half storeys may be justified;***
- ***Comprise a layout and design whereby each street as a regular appearance in terms of building line and building form, allowing for a mix of streets that will contain detached buildings of two storeys, of one and a half storeys and of bungalows;***
- ***As part of the Green Ring of Policy BG9, they:***
 - ***lay out a new open space on the Pound Lane frontage to serve as a play and amenity area, to be integral to the flood risk management strategy and to contain biodiversity value; and***
 - ***provide amenity land within the developable area in accordance with development plan standards;***
- ***In the event that the PassivHaus Standard is not adopted as per Policy BG14, the buildings optimise their solar access through their orientation and building design.***

This policy allocates land at Smilers Farm on Pound Lane for approx. 120 new homes, a GP surgery, a day care facility, new shops and a village green opposite the new public open space proposed at Hall Farm. The scheme will also create an opportunity to put in place a new road, footpath and cycleway link from Pound Lane to Lower Avenue to improve the wider infrastructure of the Plotlands.

It is the third largest of the sites proposed for allocation, making up 10% of the total housing allocation capacity. The policy defines the developable area on the Policies Map and sets out a series of essential development requirements in terms of the mix of uses, design principles and phasing and of how its commercial assets will be delivered. Given this scale and mix of uses, it requires the provision of a masterplan to be agreed with the Borough Council prior an outline planning application for the whole scheme being submitted.

The policy acknowledges that approx. one third of the site lies in Flood Zone 3a (subject to the highest risk) and another third lies in Flood Zone 2 (subject to more than normal risk). A 'sequential test' has been carried out (see the Site Assessment report) to ensure that the proposed land uses are located on the site in a way that minimises the effects of future flooding. The Floor Risk Assessment required at the planning application stage will set out how this has been achieved in detail. In practice, it means that the housing uses are confined to those parts of the site that are at a lower or no flood risk, with the other uses and public open space located in the higher risk area, as required by the test.

The site is well located within the new village for a new GP surgery building as well as providing a new childcare facility and additional shop units. They will be located at the front of the site in line with Local Plan Policy HC10. These uses now fall within Class E of the Use Classes Order and to ensure they are delivered and retained on the site, it is expected that the Borough Council will impose a planning condition restricting their change of use within the new Class E to exclude their use for R&D uses (formerly B1(b)) or an industrial process (formerly B1(c)). The condition will also require that at least one unit is occupied by a shop use (formerly A1), one unit is occupied by a health centre use and one unit is occupied by a day nursery use. As the site will lie within 400m of the new primary school at Hall Farm, it is not an appropriate location for a hot food take way use, as per Local Plan Policy R16.

POLICY BG6: SITES SOUTH OF LONDON ROAD

The Neighbourhood Plan allocates the following sites South of London Road, as shown on the Policies Map, for residential development schemes:

- 1. Land West of Old Church Road for approx. 40 homes as specialist accommodation for older people***
- 2. Land East of Old Church Road for approx. 20 homes***
- 3. Land East of St. Margaret's Primary School for approx. 15 homes***

Development proposals at each site will be supported provided they:

- Accord with an outline masterplan prepared to cover all three sites that determines how the development of the sites will be co-ordinated, with special regard paid to vehicular access, layouts and provisions to accommodate the Green Ring provisions of Policy BG9;***
- Comprise a landscape scheme that includes a noise attenuation buffer to the A13, as appropriate, and that accommodates the Green Ring provisions of Policy BG9 in respect of enabling a new footpath connection to the adjoining allocation site(s);***
- Comprise a mix of detached, semi-detached and bungalow homes of no more than two and a half storeys in height;***

- ***Adopt a layout and design of the public realm that priorities pedestrians over vehicles with buildings arranged to provide an active frontage or surveillance to the Green Ring;***
- ***Incorporates SUDS provision with the landscape scheme and ecological features; and***
- ***In the event that the PassivHaus Standard is not adopted as per Policy BG14, the buildings optimise their solar access through their orientation and building design.***

This policy allocates three sites on London Road for a total of approx. 75 new homes, including 40 homes for independent (55+) living. The sites adjoin one another on either side of Old Church Road and are bounded by the A13 to their south and by some existing large buildings fronting London Road.

The policy defines the developable area on the Policies Map and sets out a series of essential development requirements in terms of design principles, including how they will each deliver their Green Ring elements in tandem with scheme phasing. Given their close inter-relationship, which may extend to having to share site accesses, the policy requires that their proposals are co-ordinated at the planning application stage through a masterplan covering all three sites.

POLICY BG7: SMALL & MEDIUM HOUSING SITES

The Neighbourhood Plan allocates the following sites, as shown on the Policies Map, for residential development schemes:

- 1. 245 Pound Lane for approx. 30 homes***
- 2. Alpha Close/Eric Road for approx. 25 homes***

Development proposals will be supported provided they:

- ***Comprise a layout and arrangement of plots that reflect the character of the adjoining built up area, most notably in fronting buildings on to the street in regular north-south and east-west patterns and plot widths and depths;***
- ***Comprise a layout and design whereby each street as a regular appearance in terms of building line and building form, allowing for a mix of streets that will contain detached buildings of two storeys, of one and a half storeys and of bungalows; and***
- ***As part of the Green Ring of Policy BG9, they make provision in their layouts for pedestrian and cycleway access through the sites to connect the adjoining roads at the rear of their sites; and***
- ***In the event that the PassivHaus Standard is not adopted as per Policy BG14, the buildings optimise their solar access through their orientation and building design.***

This policy allocates two sites at Alpha Close/Eric Road and at 245 Pound Lane that have been made available for development in the plan period. Both currently lie in the Green Belt and are considered to be suitable for release so they may contribute to the overall vision and to meeting the Local Plan target.

In each case, the policy defines the developable area of each site on the Policies Map and sets out a series of essential development requirements in terms of design principles. Both the Alpha Close/Eric Road site and 245 Pound Lane site will open up access from the village to the Green Ring and the policy makes it a requirement that such provision is made within their

proposed layouts. Their design must also fit with the strong character of the roads and plots that they adjoin.

At 245 Pound Lane, much of the land is subject to occasional surface water flooding. This has been taken into account in the definition of the developable area, which is only half of the gross site area to allow for SUDS provision. The land was originally earmarked for demolition to allow a new bus road to be constructed from Pound Lane to Eversley to serve potentially a new secondary school, but with the provisions for new walking and cycling across the strategic gap to the new school and Pitsea as part of Policy BG4, that road is considered no longer necessary.

POLICY BG8: DESIGN CODE

All housing development proposals are required to comply with the Design Code as set out in Appendix A with the exception of those sites allocated in Policies BG3 – BG7.

This policy replaces Local Plan Policies DES2 and DES3 in the Parish by establishing a Design Code to manage housing windfall schemes of Policy BG2 in the new village. The Code covers both the existing Bowers Gifford part of the new village and the current Plotlands.

It comprises requirements in respect of the design of plots, dwellings, boundaries, access, parking and landscaping. It contains a schedule setting out those requirements for each road or part of road to recognise that there are subtle differences in the village within the dominant low-density character. It allows for developers to use their discretion in respect of building, roofing and hardstanding materials, landscape scheme species, vehicular access points and front building line above the minimum.

The Code is set out in Appendix A and is derived from a character appraisal report prepared for the BGNBNP by independent consultants in 2019. The policy will be implemented for minor housing development schemes (i.e. fewer than 10 dwellings) by a Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO), which will grant automatic planning permission for proposals that fully accord with the Code, subject to conditions and to S106/CIL agreement contributions to the Green Ring, to the Village Green Travel Strategy and to the Essex Coast RAMS. Schemes of more than 10 homes will not be eligible to come through the NDO route but must have full regard to the design code relevant to their location. Proposals for non-housing uses should demonstrate that they have had regard to the Code in their design.

POLICY BG9: THE GREEN RING

The Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Green Ring comprises a strategic network of green infrastructure assets and other open space and amenity land. Development proposals in the village or that are otherwise appropriate in the Green Belt must not undermine the multi-functional value of the Green Ring by way of their location, use or design.

This policy proposes the creation and improvement of a major green infrastructure feature to serve the new village: the 'Green Ring'. It comprises a network of existing and new green infrastructure assets and an improved and extended network of footpaths and cycleways. It seeks to protect their special value for the local community to use and enjoy and their biodiversity and climate change mitigation value.

The Green Ring will be the type of compensatory improvement measure envisaged by the NPPF §138 when proposing to release land from the Green Belt. The two largest releases from the Green Belt at Hall Farm and Little Chalvedon Hall will deliver much of the Green Ring as part of their proposals, notably the new country park and improved footpath and cycleway connectivity to Pitsea/Eversley respectively.

Some of the smaller sites, notably on London Road, can also contribute to its delivery by coordinating their layouts and landscape proposals. It is hoped that the proposals of Policy E6 of the Local Plan for new economic development at Bradfields Farm will provide for new footpath and cycleway connectivity through the scheme to join up with the Green Ring at Burnt Mills Road near the Parish boundary and at Hall Farm.

Beyond the Parish boundary, the Green Ring can also be delivered by the Local Plan proposals for Pitsea and Eversley in its Policy H11. In doing so, the Green Ring can become an important way in which the local community can access the higher order education and leisure facilities there without having to make many trips by car in line with Local Plan Policy T3. Wider still, it could form an integral part of the Basildon Green Infrastructure Strategy and the South Essex Green Grid, better connecting the community with the Wat Tyler Country Park at Pitsea, the RSPB centre at Bowers Marsh and South Benfleet.

The Green Ring is a new concept that has evolved from considering how the emerging site proposals may be co-ordinated within and beyond the parish to maximise their multifunctional green infrastructure value.

POLICY BG10: ESSEX COAST RECREATION AVOIDANCE & MITIGATION STRATEGY

All proposals for residential development will be required to make a financial contribution towards the mitigation measures in accordance with the adopted Essex Coast RAMS Supplementary Planning Document to avoid adverse in-combination recreational disturbance effects on European Sites.

This policy has been recommended by Natural England for inclusion in all neighbourhood plans in the Essex Coast area. The strategy (RAMS) is the means by which the effects of new development in that area will be managed to avoid causing harm to its internationally important habitats. The strategy is set out in the Supplementary Planning Document adopted by the Borough Council in September 2020, which requires all schemes for new homes (including those consented through the NDO) to make a financial contribution to delivering the strategy (£125.58 per dwelling for year 2020/21).

BG11 LOCAL GREEN SPACES

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the following Local Green Spaces, as shown on the Policies Map:

- 1. London Road Allotments***
- 2. London Road Playing Field***

Inappropriate development within a Local Green Space will be refused unless it can be demonstrated there are very special circumstances.

This policy designates two Local Green Spaces on London Road for the purpose of giving them the same status as the Green Belt. Both spaces are currently in the Green Belt but will become part of the inset village with the surrounding development sites on London Road and so this policy maintains their current status. Each site is considered to meet the national policy tests for designation and will also form part of the Green Ring of Policy BG9.

POLICY BG12: POUND LANE

All development proposals that will be served by Pound Lane will be required to make proportionate financial contributions to a package of sustainable travel and traffic management measures on Pound Lane between Burnt Mills Road and London Road to be agreed with the highways authority.

This policy defines Pound Lane as a location to implement a package of measures to manage traffic and to promote its use by pedestrians and cyclists as well as vehicle users. It already forms the 'backbone' to the village and this role will become increasingly important with the many development proposals along its length.

All of the proposals that are served by this important road will place new demands on it with the traffic they generate from new homes and that they attract, e.g. the school and shops. Although the Green Travel Strategy of Policy BG13 should go a long way to reducing the need to travel by car within the village, the levels of local traffic will increase. The purpose of the measures, which will form part of a wider package of investments as per Local Plan Policy T1, will be to favour local trips and to discourage rat-running between the A127 and London Road by those that neither live nor work in the village. A key part of the proposals will be delivered directly by the realignment of the road as part of the Chalvedon scheme of Policy BG4. Proposals on London Road, including the allocations of Policy BG6, will not be required to make contributions under this policy.

POLICY BG13: GREEN TRAVEL STRATEGY

All development proposals will be required to make proportionate financial contributions to implement a Green Travel Strategy that will invest in upgrading bus services from the village to neighbouring towns and in other promotional measures to encourage and enable walking and cycling.

All new buildings will be required to include an electric vehicle charging point and a cycle storage facility. All new commercial, business and service uses will be required to provide secure cycle racks/pods as part of their public realm.

This policy requires all new development proposals – the site allocations and future windfall schemes – to contribute to the successful delivery of a Green Travel Strategy for the village. It is expected the strategy will comprise a package of leading-edge promotional initiatives and services to encourage walking, cycling and using local bus services, as well as requiring electric car charging points etc in line with various Local Plan policies (e.g. T1, T3, T4). Physical works to highways, footpath and cycleways will be separately required and implemented via the respective site allocation policies and planning applications and by Policy BG12 for Pound Lane.

The strategy is necessary to put in place measures to ensure the new village is as sustainable as possible in terms of its travel behaviours and impacts. An assessment has been carried out of the whole BGNBNP using the 'Transport for New Homes' checklist (see separate

document). In order to secure a 'good' score, it is essential that there is a step change in how the local communities travels within and outside the new village. The Parish Council will investigate how the co-ordination and delivery of the strategy may be organised by a local body to fine tune initiatives to meet local needs and to incentivise sustainable travel behaviours.

BG14 CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION: NEW BUILDINGS

Developers are encouraged to adopt the PassivHaus standard to deliver at least 50% of the buildings on their development schemes. Where this is proposed development proposals will not be required to:

- ***Provide a Post Occupancy Evaluation Report;***
- ***Make provision for on-site renewable energy generation or make a financial contribution to any off-site renewable energy generation proposal;***
- ***Calculate carbon emissions from any other part of the development; or***
- ***Make a financial contribution to meeting the costs of the Green Travel Plan or of any other climate change mitigation measure.***

All planning permissions granted for new dwellings will include a planning condition to require the provision of a Post Occupancy Evaluation Report to the local planning authority within a specified period, unless exempted by this policy. Where the report identifies that the required energy performance of national standards has not been met and it makes recommendations for reasonable corrective action, the applicant must demonstrate that those actions have been implemented before the condition will be considered to be discharged.

This policy is intended to deliver a step change in the carbon emission performance of all new developments in the Parish and, in doing so, to encourage and incentivise the use of the PassivHaus standard of building design. By focusing on reducing the need for energy, achieving this standard will make the most significant contribution to mitigating climate change that the Neighbourhood Plan can deliver.

The policy is in two parts. Its first part provides an alternative means of meeting the ambitions of the Government's proposed Future Homes Standard (FHS). The FHS will be applied nationally and will focus on ensuring that the country's new building stock will be net carbon neutral. Development proposals will therefore be expected to comply with the FHS, which will replace any local discretion.

However, although the FHS will be an improvement in the requirements made of new build schemes, its contribution to mitigating climate change through the application of the 'energy hierarchy' is not generally regarded as being as effective as delivering buildings to a PassivHaus standard. Such buildings are proven to create healthy and comfortable buildings in which to live or work and they will dramatically reduce the requirement for grid and storage enhancements and halving the amount of renewable generation capacity required. Reducing the heating energy demand through the application of passive design measures and a 'fabric first' approach is therefore the only practical way to achieve zero carbon homes in reality. Whilst the Policy cannot therefore make the PassivHaus standard a requirement, it can and should offer landowners and developers with the option of an alternative that more than meets the Standard and provide a clear incentive to maximise the number of new buildings that are certified to PassivHaus standard.

To incentivise this alternative route, which will remain voluntary, applicants that are proposing to use this standard for at least 50% of the building units, will be exempted from requirements that will apply to schemes using the FHS route. Such requirements serve purposes that are either not relevant to the PassivHaus standard (i.e. by proposing an energy reduction strategy) or where climate change mitigation impacts will be significantly lower and indirect. These requirements are mitigation measures that have been put in place to make good the inadequacies of conventional building schemes, that are not necessary to apply to PassivHaus buildings.

Its second part requires the developer of a consented housing development scheme of any size to carry out a post-occupancy evaluation (POE) including actual energy use, and to submit the report to the local planning authority. It will be implemented by attaching a planning condition, which will only be discharged once the report has been submitted and any recommended actions to rectify any performance gap with the design stage assessment are carried out by the developer. A quarter of UK carbon emissions derive from housing. Despite good intentions to reduce this, many new and refurbished homes have been found to use twice the amount of energy aimed for. Without suitable systems for standard setting, predicting, measuring, feedback and learning from the outcomes, this poor performance will continue. On the other hand, PassivHaus certified schemes will not fail in this way and they are therefore exempted from this policy.

Every new build or redevelopment project in the Parish provides an opportunity to make a difference and a contribution towards meeting our climate change targets for 2050. This new information requirement need not be an unreasonable expectation of even the smallest schemes for new buildings. Land values are high relative to build costs and ought to be sufficient to ensure requirements to tackle improving carbon performance are viable.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Neighbourhood Plan will be implemented through the development management process, which will ensure that the policies are delivered successfully, including the timely provision of supporting infrastructure and the ongoing management and operation of that infrastructure to the highest standards.

Development Management and Community Engagement

The site allocation policies will require planning applications to be submitted, in some cases, following the preparation and agreement of site masterplans. The policies are intended to set out only the most essential of development, land use and design principles, with the details of each proposal being addressed at the masterplan and planning application stages. This provides developers with considerable flexibility in formulating their proposals.

The essential principles have been derived from the site assessment process and will ensure that schemes will be of a high quality, will complement other schemes in delivering the Plan vision and objectives and will successfully avoid or mitigate the potential for harmful environmental effects.

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications and will provide the Borough Council with comments on those applications as necessary. It will also expect to engage with the Borough Council and developers at the masterplanning and/or preapplication stage, to ensure the Plan provisions are properly acknowledged, understood and reflected in the emerging proposals. In addition, the Parish Council expects all the proposals coming forward to implement the site allocation policies BG3 – BG7 to make provision for genuine and effective local community engagement at the pre-application stage and to demonstrate in their applications how that engagement has informed the proposals.

The Parish Council is also bringing forward a Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO) to help implement Policy BG2 in respect of minor windfall housing schemes. It is intended to encourage landowners of small schemes (currently fewer than 10 homes) to adhere to the Design Code of Policy BG8 by granting automatic planning permission, subject to conditions. The NDO will apply to the village area that is proposed to be inset from the Green Belt, i.e. Bowers Gifford and the North Benfleet Plotlands. The process for making the NDO matches that of the Plan and a draft NDO is subject to a parallel consultation exercise.

Infrastructure & Phasing

The scale of housing development proposed in the Plan requires a range of new supporting infrastructure to be provided of a high quality and in a timely way. The site allocation policies BG3 – BG7 make the provision of some of that infrastructure on site a principle of the allocation, e.g. the new primary school at Hall Farm. Some other policies, e.g. the Green Ring, propose the type and location of that new infrastructure. In all cases, the infrastructure is required to meet the provisions of the new Local Plan and/or to mitigate the potential for harmful effects identified in the site assessment process.

The precise specification of each infrastructure element, together with its funding, phasing and ongoing operation will be addressed during the masterplanning and planning application stages. The developers of the three largest allocated sites – Hall Farm, Little Chalvedon Hall and Smilers Farm – have indicated to the Parish Council during the drafting of the policies that the on-site infrastructure requirements are acceptable and viable in principle. Their concept

proposals that are published in the evidence base for consultation show how that infrastructure will be delivered.

In general terms, it is expected on-site infrastructure will be delivered during or at the end of the scheme build out. It is hoped that the new GP Surgery at Smilers Farm and important elements of the Green Ring will be delivered early in the plan period to show the established local community that the Plan will deliver real benefits. More specifically, Policy BG3 requires the new community facility at Hall Farm to be delivered in its first phase, as the Parish Council intends to use the new facility as the focus for bringing the old and new community together over the decade of construction in the new village.

Community Development

The Parish Council is investigating creating a new community-led management body to be responsible for securing the long term operation and management of much of the new green, social and other infrastructure for the long term benefit of the new village community.

That body may manage parts of the designated Green Ring and take a lead in implementing the Green Travel Strategy. It may also manage new amenity land within the developable areas of the allocated major development sites (rather than this being done by separate private management companies) and may manage the delivery and operation of other community assets.

If the proposal is to be taken forward, the Parish Council will endeavour to set up the body within 12 months of the making of the Neighbourhood Plan in time to be able to play an early role in managing the implementation of the major schemes.

The main benefits of this approach to long term community stewardship elsewhere in the country are that they achieve stronger community spirit, wider participation and greater environmental care. They help secure a closer integration of the new residents with the existing community who are encouraged to have a stake in the long-term success of new development. It may be a distinctive feature in marketing to prospective occupants and is likely to achieve quicker sales and house price premiums across the bands. It is also more likely to achieve the stretching environmental targets and to avoid non-compliance penalties, e.g. transport modal shift.