

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Local Development Plans

Local Councils are now well advanced on the Local Plan review process when the development plans for the area are reviewed to ensure that the supply of development land matches the housing needs for the area. This is a particularly challenging review given the new, higher, housing targets that have been set for councils by the Labour Government.

Colchester Local Plan Review

The draft Colchester City Local Plan which covers Mount Bures was published for a first round of public consultation in December 2025. Mount Bures is not identified as a sustainable location for development within the Plan and there are no proposed allocations for housing directly affecting the Parish. The plan does however include the designation of our village green as 'Local Green Space', formally recognising the importance to the community of this land which we have been using as a village green for over 50 years. This round of consultation ended on 14 January. There will be a further round of public consultation on the plan before it comes into effect.

Braintree Local Plan Review

The Braintree Local Plan review is developing on a later timescale to the Colchester City Plan. In Braintree District Council's "Call for sites" last year, a local landowner put forward an area of the field between the houses in Mount Bures and the level crossing for what was described as affordable housing. This was initially rejected, as had a previous proposal in 2016, on the basis of Braintree Planning Officers' advice that the site was not suitable for development due to its environmental sensitivity and poor connectivity. Surprisingly, the Braintree Local Plan committee subsequently decided that it would nevertheless be appropriate to place a development boundary around the site in the draft plan that has now been issued for consultation and which can be found at www.braintree.gov.uk/localplanreview. No specific site allocation has been made in the draft plan, but the location is listed for 8 houses and the Bures Hamlet ward Councillor has previously said that the site is needed to meet the housing needs of Bures Hamlet. Drawing a development boundary around the site would allow a development of any kind to be put forward for planning permission and Braintree Planning Officers have previously advised the site could hold up to 17 houses.

Although this site directly impacts the community within Mount Bures and is divorced from any settlement in Braintree, it lies in the Braintree District area and Mount Bures does not have any representation on Braintree District Council. There is therefore a risk that our views may carry little weight. It is important therefore that Mount Bures residents make their views known both to Mount Bures Parish Council and by responding to the Braintree District Council consultation which closes on Friday 17 April.

Residents can make their views known to the Parish Council by emailing the Parish Clerk, Kevin Money, at mountburespc@gmail.com or by speaking to any of the Councillors.

The Parish Council will also hold a 'drop-in' session in the Village Hall between 5 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday 15 April at which residents can speak to Councillors.

Comments on the draft Braintree Local Plan can also be made on the Braintree District Council Consultation Portal which can be accessed through www.braintree.gov.uk/localplanreview. Comments must be submitted before 5 p.m on Friday 17 April.

Bures Neighbourhood Plan

The draft Bures St Mary and Bures Hamlet Neighbourhood Plan was published for what is known as Regulation 16 consultation in the autumn. Mount Bures Parish Council contributed to the development of this Local Plan by requesting that the Bures Neighbourhood Plan include the small area of our village green that lies just within the Bures Hamlet boundary in their Neighbourhood Plan as 'Local Green Space' mirroring the inclusion of the village green as Local Green Space in the Colchester City Local Plan. The Parish Council was therefore surprised to discover that, despite this clear interest, Mount Bures had not been included in the previous round of public consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan and that our request for this small area of land to be designated had been rejected. In commenting on the draft Neighbourhood Plan the Council has therefore raised concerns over the flawed consultation process and the refusal to include our village green in the Plan as Local Green Space. The Council and other Mount Bures residents have also questioned why the prominent view from the village green towards the Bures Cluster, which is widely enjoyed by people living or passing through Mount Bures, has not been included in the Neighbourhood Plan. Colchester City Council have also raised concerns. The Parish Council's comments on the draft Neighbourhood Plan are on the Parish Council website. The draft Plan and consultation comments are now being considered by an independent examiner who will determine whether any revisions are needed to the plan before it is finalised.

WANTED – VOLUNTEER OR CONTRACTOR TO CLEAR FOOTPATHS ACROSS THE PARISH

The Parish Council needs a volunteer or contractor interested in cutting vegetation growth on the footpath network across Mount Bures during the summer months, beginning this spring.

Every year, the Council arranges and pays for around 7km of footpaths to be cleared of excessive vegetation growth by cutting grass and occasionally trimming field hedges. This work would suit a volunteer interested in helping to look after the footpath network or a contractor experienced in such work. The Council has a wheeled strimmer for the use of volunteers which makes light work of cutting grass. Terms subject to discussion with the Parish Council.

If anyone is interested in undertaking such work, please contact the Parish Clerk, Kevin Money, at mountburespc@gmail.com.