

Dunton Garden Suburb - Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Garden Suburb?

A Garden Suburb is a new development on the edge of an existing settlement that is shaped by a set of Garden City principles. The principles relate to the design of the suburb such as making sure it is laid out so that it provides high-quality housing of different tenures (for sale, to rent, social, shared ownership, self-build, etc.), industry buildings and local facilities within easy reach of open spaces and transport networks. Garden Suburbs should also ensure engagement with local communities is conducted as early as possible and present options for securing the long term stewardship of land.

The UK charity the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) produced guidance for local councils in 2013 to encourage more new strategic developments to be based on garden city/suburb principles to tackle housing needs, whilst getting benefits for the environment and not compromising design or infrastructure provision:

http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/Creating_Garden_Cities_and_Suburbs_Today_-_a_guide_for_councils.pdf

There are already other Garden Suburbs being planned by other Councils in England. The closest to Basildon/Brentwood Boroughs at the moment are in the District of Maldon on the Essex coast and Ipswich in Suffolk. They are more advanced than the Dunton Garden Suburb proposal and show what is possible if further work is carried out to explore what the suburbs could look like, what infrastructure they need (road junctions, new schools, health centres, local shops and open spaces, etc.) and how they will tie into their nearby settlements. If you would like to find out more:

- <http://www.southmaldongardensuburb.co.uk/>
- http://www.maldon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1998/north_heybridge_garden_suburbdraftsmfconsultationdraft.pdf
- <https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/content/ipswich-garden-suburb-development-brief-supplementary-planning-document-public-consultation>

2. What has happened so far?

The Dunton Garden Suburb is at a very early informal planning stage. At the moment Basildon and Brentwood Borough Council's as Local Planning Authorities have signed an agreement called a 'Memorandum of Understanding' which commits their resources to the project meeting the requirements of the legislation. They have jointly produced the concept document that explores the idea of a potential development across the shared boundary to encompass land in both boroughs. The purpose of the public consultation is to test the idea with local people, businesses, landowners,

developers and statutory consultees such as the Environment Agency. There are however no formal plans or proposals in place to proceed with the Garden Suburb at this time.

3. Is this a planning application?

No, this is an informal planning concept developed by Basildon and Brentwood Borough Councils to test the idea of a cross boundary development with local people, businesses, landowners, developers and statutory consultees.

If it is determined that the proposal has strategic planning merits and should be explored further to work out how it could be planned in detail, including what infrastructure would be required, both Councils would need to study the area in greater detail and insert the cross boundary location into their respective Local Plans. They would need to sign another Memorandum of Understanding to jointly prepare a special type of planning policy called an "Area Action Plan" or "Masterplan Framework" to ensure it could be planned properly, maintaining the design principles of a Garden Suburb and setting out in more detail how land should be used and when it should come forward for development.

4. What is the point in the consultation?

Local Planning Authorities must by law consider all reasonable site alternatives for meeting their development needs, including if there are opportunities through cross boundary working with neighbouring authorities. Both Councils have therefore looked at the boundary they share and jointly produced the concept document to explore whether a potential development across the Borough boundary might have advantages, as well as what the constraints to bringing forward such a development could be. They have both published this document for public consultation and both Council's decision making committees will need to make a further judgement as to how to proceed informed by the results of the public consultation, evidence and legal requirements.

5. Isn't it unusual for two Councils to be consulting on a joint planning proposal like this? Why are you doing it?

Since 2011, Councils have been required by law to cooperate on strategic planning and cross boundary matters. This requires a greater level of joined up working than has previously been practised. More and more Councils are now having to prepare joint plans for specific development areas due to complex cross boundary issues; most recently Rochford District Council and Southend on Sea Borough Council spent 3 years preparing a joint planning policy document for an area including Southend Airport, which straddles their administrative boundary.

A big problem for many councils is securing infrastructure investment that makes a real difference at a local level. Often new developments are too small to secure meaningful contributions. Piecemeal small developments (10 units here, 5 units there, etc.) and even some smaller, large developments (e.g. 100 houses) are not often big enough to secure enough contributions to upgrade the local facilities that will be impacted most and so a compromise is often reached in the balancing act of making a planning judgement. Larger developments however tend not to have the same issues due to economies of scale and the sheer mass of development, particularly if they are accommodating new facilities within their boundaries that developers can build for a service provider (e.g. a new

secondary or primary school, health centre, etc.). Basildon and Brentwood Borough Councils would therefore like to explore whether a cross boundary development at Dunton would mean they could secure better infrastructure provision together given the potential size of any new community.

6. How big is the site of the Dunton Garden Suburb area?

The area of land south of the A127, north of c2c railway lines and between the A128 and West Mayne is around 420 hectares: approx. 264 hectares of which are in Brentwood Borough and approx. 156 hectares are in Basildon Borough. For comparison, a hectare is roughly the same area as an adult football pitch.

7. What is the land used for at the moment?

The majority of land is currently used for agriculture or grazing with scattered rural housing. On either side of Lower Dunton Road in the Basildon Borough, there are some existing residential buildings with gardens, a hotel and conference venue and business buildings within Dunton Village, some of which are protected by law through a Listed Building status. None of the land is a Local Nature Reserve or Country Park. There is a private golf course, the majority of which is in Brentwood Borough.

8. How much land do the Councils own?

Brentwood Borough Council do not own any land in the area. Basildon Council own some highway verge along Mandeville Way/West Mayne. The rest is within private ownership.

9. How much land has been put forward in the area for development by the landowners?

Land is still being submitted to the Councils in this area. At the moment around 75% of the land has been put forward to be considered for development by existing landowners, residents and businesses.

10. Why are you proposing to build on nature reserves?

The Councils are not. There are no nature reserves within the site; but it is acknowledged that there are large nature reserves outside the area but nearby at Langdon Hills Country Park and Thorndon Country Park. The Garden Suburb presents the opportunity through its layout and design to connect these two areas through new green spaces, improving the inter-connectedness of two major open spaces in Essex.

11. Will the Councils build the Garden Suburb?

It is too early to tell what role, beyond their Local Planning Authority roles, either Council could have. If it were to be allocated in the Local Plans private developers, instructed by existing landowners could build it, which is common practice up and down the country.

12. What if the Council cannot buy all the land?

The Councils are not proposing at this stage to buy any land to make the development happen; most development that now occurs, does so through private developers. If all the land cannot be secured

it may affect how a Garden Suburb is laid out and could affect how much land they develop for different purposes. If some residents or landowners want to remain, the Garden Suburb's design would need to reflect this. This could be explored further as part of a Masterplan Framework.

13. Why can't the Councils just build on brownfield sites instead?

There are simply not enough brownfield sites to meet the needs of both Boroughs. Councils have to undertake annual assessments of land availability, which includes reviewing what brownfield sites could be developed for different types of development. Basildon and Brentwood Councils have assumed that all of their brownfield site supply will be developed and despite taking these sites into account, there is still a shortfall in land required to meet housing and commercial development needs.

14. What sorts of housing could be built in the Garden Suburb?

Both Councils have agreed to the principles that a mixture of housing could be built in the Garden Suburb, including new social housing, affordable rent, shared ownership and private housing. They have also agreed in principle that if the Garden Suburb gets approved they should set aside land for self build opportunities. No details on the types of housing have been looked at given the early stage of the proposal. If the Garden Suburb were to be taken forward this would need to be informed by testing market demand and the Suburb's layout, but there is no reason it couldn't include different house types such as bungalows, detached, semi-detached, terraced, town houses, Gypsy and Traveller pitches and apartments, as well as specialist housing types for the elderly, people with learning difficulties or disabilities.

15. Why does the Garden Suburb include new Gypsy & Traveller sites?

Both Brentwood and Basildon Borough Councils are legally required to set aside land in their Local Plans that can accommodate their different development needs, including the need arising from growth in local Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities and ensure the Councils comply with Government policy.

16. Why do Gypsies or Travellers need permanent sites to live on?

The national planning definition of Gypsies and Travellers, established in law, accepts that whilst a Gypsy or Traveller is a person of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, it includes people who on grounds of their own, or their family's, or dependants' educational or health needs, or old age, have ceased to travel temporary or permanently. It is for this reason why permanent pitch provision must be included in Local Plans.

17. How many Gypsy and Traveller pitches are proposed to be provided in the Garden Suburb and where will they be located?

The exact number of new pitches that could be accommodated in the Garden Suburb has not been determined and would need to be informed by a more detailed master-planning exercise, however Basildon Borough Council's new draft Local Plan policy for Gypsy and Traveller provision proposes to limit the amount of pitches on a new site to a maximum of 15. Exact locations would have to be

determined through master-planning the Garden Suburb if the project was taken forward to determine how best to integrate the new pitches with the rest of the community and any existing Gypsy and Traveller pitches within the area.

Basildon Borough Council does not support the provision of a site as large as Dale Farm to be developed anywhere in the Borough. It was felt to be too large to integrate with the existing community and was laid out in a manner which was unsafe for its residents.

18. There is no mention about additional schools, roads, health centres or community infrastructure? The existing facilities would not cope with more pressure?

With all large scale developments planned through a Local Plan, infrastructure such as new road links, road junctions, health centres, schools, shops and green spaces can be provided as part of the new development. The exact details of what should be provided however will depend on how much development is being planned for and what the infrastructure/service providers request in terms of new or expanded facilities.

As Dunton Garden Suburb is just an informal concept consultation at this time and has not been subject to a detailed masterplan framework the level of work to determine what is required has not been carried out.

19. When could the proposal be built?

Depending on construction methods and development phasing, strategic developments of this size typically take around eight years of detailed planning (including allocating the land for development through a Local Plan, carrying out detailed environmental and ecological assessments, new highway designs and preparation work, Outline and Full planning applications, any legal agreements, etc.) before anything is built. It will depend on the size of the Garden Suburb and market forces, but it could take anything between a further 10-15 years before the development is completed.

20. Why were all residents in West Horndon written to and yet I have not received a personal notification from Basildon Borough Council regarding the Dunton Garden Suburb proposal?

Brentwood Borough Council did not write to all residents in West Horndon. As with Basildon Borough Council's approach, it wrote a letter or email to anybody or organisation who had electively registered on its Local Plan consultation database.

In order to ensure as many people as possible knew of the consultation who were not on the mailing lists, each Council notified all Council Ward Members, all Parish Councils, all Statutory Bodies (such as English Heritage, Natural England and the Environment Agency) and residents/landowners within the site. They also issued joint press releases which were picked up in the Basildon Echo, Yellow Advertiser, Brentwood Gazette and Billericay and Wickford Gazette, as well as BBC Radio. In addition both Councils promoted the consultation through Facebook and Twitter, given the increase popularity of social media as a means for people to communicate. Both Councils have jointly published half page adverts in editions of the Yellow Advertiser, Brentwood Gazette, Billericay and Wickford Gazette and Basildon Echo since the consultation was launched in January 2015.

The Councils have also run a special event for people living within the site and/or site landowners. There have been two drop in sessions held in Laindon and West Horndon on 14th January 2015 and two more are being held on 4th and 9th February respectively. Additional poster advertising has been arranged to promote the latest drop-ins in the same publications as above and on the London and Southend bound platforms at Basildon & Laindon Railway Stations. West Horndon railway station does not have any platform advertising facilities.

21. How can I find out more?

There will be two public drop-in events where you can speak to officers of either Council on:

- Wednesday 4 February 4.30pm – 9pm at the Presidents' Community Centre, Hoover Drive, **Laindon**, SS15 6LF; and
- Monday 9 February 4.30pm – 9pm at the Christabella Wing, St Francis Church, Thorndon Avenue, **West Horndon** CM13 3TR.
- Alternatively to find out more you can visit our websites: www.basildon.gov.uk/dunton & www.brentwood.gov.uk/dunton

22. How can I vote or submit comments?

Responding to the consultation is not a vote. You can comment on the consultation by supporting it or objecting to it and setting out your reasons why. There are prompt questions through the consultation document to help you.

Anonymous comments cannot be considered.

Comments can be made online using the joint consultation portal accessible from the websites above.

- Comments can e-mail into either Council using planningpolicy@basildon.gov.uk, or planning.policy@brentwood.gov.uk.
- Alternatively comments can be made by writing to either Council:
 - Dunton Garden Suburb Consultation 2015, Planning Policy Team, Basildon Borough Council, The Basildon Centre, St. Martin's Square, Basildon, Essex, SS14 1DL
 - Dunton Garden Suburb Consultation 2015, Planning Policy Team, Brentwood Borough Council, Town Hall, Ingrave Road, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 8AY

Comments only need to be sent to one Council. All results will be combined after the consultation has closed. Duplicated submissions submitted to both Councils will only be considered once.

Please Note: All comments submitted to the consultation will be made public in due course unless they discriminate against any group or individual, or contain inappropriate or offensive language. Such comments will not be processed and may be referred to other agencies in accordance with legislation.