Gladman Developments Ltd have successfully invested in communities throughout the UK over the past 25 years, developing high quality and sustainable residential, commercial and industrial schemes. A process of public consultation is being undertaken by Gladman Developments Ltd in order to present the emerging development proposals for land off Oak Road, Halstead to the local community. We are proposing residential development of up to 300 homes, together with new open spaces.

Site Description
The site is located to the south west of Halstead on the ridge line of the Colne Valley and currently consists of two arable fields divided by a hedgerow. Next to the south west boundary of the site is Upper Beakley Farm, with Oak Road running along the northern boundary and the A131 along the western boundary. To the south of the site lies gradually sloping farmland fields.

Planning Context
Braintree District Council has an adopted Core Strategy, which provides the spatial planning guidance for the District to 2026. The Council is currently looking at potential sites for residential development to meet the needs of the District over this period.

Halstead is identified in the Core Strategy as one of three main towns within the District. Whilst it is the smallest of the three, amongst Braintree and Witham, it is classed as being the major service centre for the north of the District. The settlement features a wide range of services and facilities, including schools and shops, demonstrating the settlement’s capacity to accommodate a share of the District’s present and future development needs.

The Need for New Housing
Every Council is required by the Government to boost significantly the supply of housing and to make planning decisions in light of a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’.

Braintree District Council currently suggest that it has an adequate level of land to meet their five year housing requirement. However, the requirement currently set out in the Core Strategy substantially underestimates the actual fully objectively assessed need in the District. The Council is currently undertaking a review of its housing need, following a market study that indicated additional housing is now required. It is likely that more housing land and additional new deliverable sites will be required to meet this need in the short to medium term.

Why is the Site Sustainable?
The proposed development of the site would form a logical extension to the south of the town, located close to a good range of local services and facilities. The site is well screened from the wider landscape and relates well to the town centre with easy access via the A131.

The Application
Gladman Developments Ltd intends to submit an outline application for up to 300 homes to Braintree District Council in summer 2014. This would establish the principle of development with the access to be agreed, and all other details will form part of subsequent applications if planning approval is given.

Development Proposals
- Up to 300 new homes, including a proportion of affordable properties (30%, approximately 90 homes);
- Proposed new access points off the A131 and Oak Road;
- Provision of extensive public open space; including a children’s play area;
- New footpaths within a green corridor across the site;
- Improved connectivity to the wider footpath network; and
- Retention and improvement of landscaping to enhance the site and boundaries.
Historic Maps

The historic maps below show the proposal site in the context of Halstead’s growth over approximately the last 140 years. Pre World War II, the site was amongst farmland fields in all directions, with Mount Hill (A131) providing the first main road access into Halstead adjacent to the site. At this time, Oak Road was a track providing access to Conies Farm and Upper Beakley Farm.

During the 1940’s to 1950’s the Halstead settlement experienced growth in the form of post War housing development, extending the settlement southwards closer to the proposals site.

Eventually during the latter part of the twentieth century, the Halstead settlement expansion reached the proposal site, with Oak Road becoming a residential street serving properties. Although Halstead has continued to expand elsewhere since the 1970’s, the settlement has not expanded any further south beyond the proposal site.
Land o’ff Oak Road, Halstead

EXISTING LOCAL CHARACTER

Landscape

The landscape surrounding Halstead is characterised as gently rolling, with medium to large arable fields set within a strong structure of woodland blocks and thick hedgerows. The patchwork of fields create an open character, however frequent hedgerows and trees form enclosure in places along routes of access and field boundaries.

Outside of the core settlement of Halstead, scattered farmsteads and cottages are located by woodland and field edges. There is a network or rural lanes and public rights of way winding throughout the landscape. The most trafficked local road is the A131, which passes directly adjacent to the site’s western boundary.

The River Colne passes through the centre of Halstead approximately half a mile to the north of the site.

Local Building Styles

Within Halstead, the local vernacular is defined by a mixture of architectural styles using traditional building materials including brickwork, rendered facades, and clay tile roofs.

There are a large number of Grade II Listed Buildings within Halstead. The Parish Church of St Andrew is the only Grade I Listed Building and is approximately one mile from the site. The closest Listed Building is Bushey Leys, a Grade II Listed Building located 75m south east of the site. The Three Pigeons Public House and Blamsters Farm are both approximately 300m from the site off Mount Hill (A131) and are also Grade II Listed Buildings.

The development proposals will reference the architectural styles that are characteristic of Halstead.
Visual Analysis of Site

This site currently consists of agricultural fields divided by an established hedgerow.

The site lies on the south western edge of Halstead and therefore provides a vehicular arrival point to the town for traffic travelling north east along The A131. The A131 and Oak Road are the only vehicle routes adjacent to the site, with Oak Road providing the nearest pedestrian access past the site.

Houses along Oak Road front onto the site, most extensively adjacent to Area A. Properties become more dispersed, set further away or orientated away from the site as Oak Road progresses along the boundary or Area B.

Existing mature vegetation along the A131 partially screens views into the site from the western boundary. An intensively managed hedgerow along Oak Road partially screens views into the site at ground level, with views more clearly available into the site at the first floor level of properties.

Upper Beakley Farm is located adjacent to the south east corner of the site, with existing mature hedgerows surrounding the farm screening views.

The site is well connected to the wider public footpath network, with a path to the south east of the site adjacent to Upper Beakley Farm. Surrounding the footpath near to the site on both sides are mature trees.

Generally, distance views beyond the site are limited due to the layering of vegetation and gently undulating topography within the area.
What are the local facilities?

The site is ideally located near to a range of existing community facilities including bus routes, schools, locals shops, healthcare facilities, places of worship and green spaces.

Approximately 1000m to the north east is the centre of Halstead. Passing adjacent to the western edge of the site is the A131 which serves as a bus route into Halstead, connecting the town to Braintree, Colchester and Sudbury. A number of bus stops are located within 500m of the site.

A public recreation ground is located approximately 300m to the north east of the site and is accessible via residential streets in the adjacent area of housing. The site is also well located in relation to existing Public Rights of Way and footpaths, the closest of which is to the south east corner of the site.

Halstead contains three primary schools and one secondary school, all of which are within a distance of 2.5km.
KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The assessment of the site and its surrounding context has identified a number of features which should be protected, retained and enhanced as part of the development proposals for the site. These considerations provide the opportunities and constraints for the development and have been used to inform the preparation of the Development Framework Plan.

Positive features include existing vegetation, nearby public footpaths and public transport links. There is also a protected hedgerow within the site and a recreation ground approximately 300m north east.

The proposals offer the opportunity for increased pedestrian links between the existing footpath network and public transport.

Due to existing hedgerow vegetation and topography, mid to long distance views from the site to the wider countryside are limited. The A131 provides a key transport route past the site, however the sound of traffic movement is evident and opportunities to provide additional screening will be necessary.
Design Principles

- The retention and enhancement of the existing vegetation structure associated with the site boundaries and other environmental assets;
- To deliver a high quality, sustainable development which reflects the scale, layout and pattern of Halstead and is appropriate to its setting;
- The development should respect the visual amenities of the wider landscape setting;
- The scheme should be visually attractive, respecting the context, form and type of existing built form and building styles evident within the local area;
- To deliver a mix of housing up to 300 new dwellings, including an element of affordable housing and a range of property sizes and types;
- The creation of a robust and appropriate development edge which provides a sensitive transition between the proposed development and wider countryside setting;
- Provision of an integrated network of public open spaces forming part of a strong green infrastructure.
Have your say

Your comments and suggestions will be taken into account when formulating the final planning application submission. All comments and feedback will be provided to the Local Planning Authority as part of the planning application.

Once a planning application has been submitted you will also be able to make further representations to Halstead Town Council who will take these into account before making decisions on the planning application.

You can keep up to date on progress using our dedicated website which provides further information and includes an online feedback form for making comments:

www.your-views.co.uk/halstead

How do I comment?

You can respond by email:

comments@your-views.co.uk (using ‘Halstead’ as the subject line)

or by post:

Your Views Halstead
Gladman House
Alexandria Way
Congleton
Cheshire

Gladman consider all correspondence received. Public responses are discussed in a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which is submitted to Halstead Town Council alongside a planning application. All comments received are included within an appendix to the SCI which ensures comments are available to the Council during consideration of the application.