



## County A

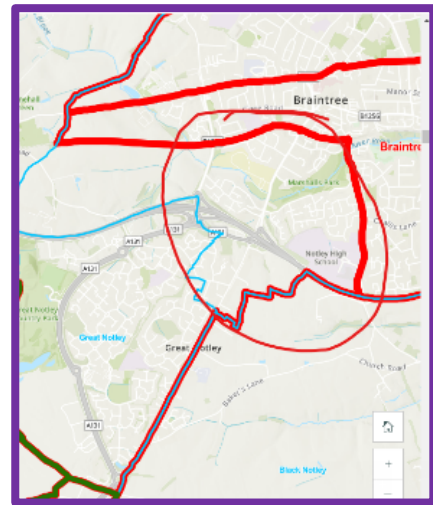


UK Govt confirms ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS will take place on 7 MAY 2026.



The 3 Fields & Great Notley boundary has expanded to include some developments to the North of the A120 and Notley High School and Braintree 6<sup>th</sup> Form – which we consider positive.

Residents in THREE FIELDS and RAYNE wards can achieve a simple *one-stop-shop* for ALL their Local Govt Needs across District and County scope BEFORE any Unitary is set-up by electing an Independent County Cllr alongside existing Independent District Cllrs; Ann, Mark and Michael – all part of the Independent network.



Cllrs can hold a County & District role at the same time



UK Govt *may* now hold Greater Essex Combined County Authority MAYORAL Election in MAY 2028 – after the establishment of the Unitary Authorities - which we consider **much more sensible**.

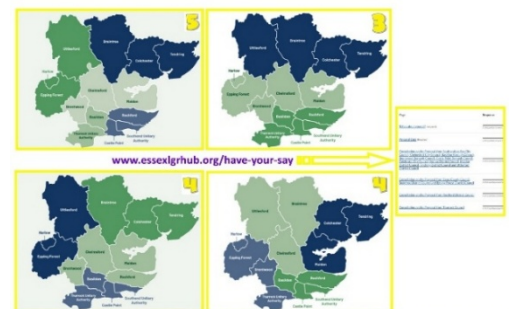
UK Govt now also appear more open to reviewing the relationship between Parish Councils and their preferred model of Delivery Committees [following the publication of a new report by the Local Policy Innovation Partnership (LPIP), [The Future of Local Democracy – Devolution and the Need to Empower Parish and Town Councils](#) – [with input from NALC] – which is also welcomed.

Follow GECCA developments here [www.essexlgrhub.org](http://www.essexlgrhub.org)

**UK Govt will also decide** the number of Unitary Authorities

Within Greater Essex Combined County Authority

MAR 2026 (3,4 or 5) or will they?



GREATER ESSEX COMBINED COUNTY AUTHORITY  
FEB 2026



## County A.1

# Has Norfolk County Council WITHDRAWN from UK Govt's Devolution Priority Program?

Will Essex County Council consider withdrawing too - until it gets funding and planning for

1. A12 widening?
2. A12 to A120 link?
3. Graded Galleys Corner roundabout?
4. AND a reduced / needs based housing allocation?



**Norfolk council leader pulls out of long-awaited devolution deal over election U-turn**



Cllr Mark AULT and Cllr Michael STAINES

**Kay Mason Billig accuses Steve Reed of forcing council to agree to poll delay in return for extra funding and powers**

**What made ministers think they could delay local elections?**



Kay Mason Billig said the council could not take part in local government reorganisation and hold elections at the same time. Photograph: Dan Burn-Forti/The Observer

A Norfolk council leader has accused the government of “bullying” her local authority into postponing elections in return for extra funding and powers, as she pulled out of long-awaited devolution deal for the county.

Kay Mason Billig, the Conservative leader of Norfolk county council, said she would no longer take part in local government reorganisation (LGR) or devolution plans in the area, saying the council could not participate in that and simultaneously hold elections.

Her announcement came after the government **scrapped plans to postpone local elections at 30 councils in England undergoing reorganisation**, in the face of a legal challenge from Reform UK.

There are concerns the election U-turn, which will see officials scrambling to organise ballots in time for polling day in May, could throw plans for the biggest council shake-up in 50 years into disarray.

“Words fail me for describing the mess the government have created with their election hokey cokey,” Billig said. “As a result, devolution and LGR are off. We cannot consent to the new statutory instrument that is necessary to set up our mayoral county combined authority in the months before our elections. So that’s it.

“The contract is broken. The Conservative group is resolved that we will not be assisting this government to deliver LGR.”

There are concerns that other council leaders could follow suit. Daniel Elmer, leader of South Norfolk council, said: “We were sold LGR as a mechanism for us to receive more money and powers locally. So far, that has not materialised and I am therefore not sure that we should be spending more of our taxpayers money on this.”

Billig called the local government secretary, **Steve Reed**, a “two-faced bully” who had forced the council to agree not to ask for local elections to go ahead, in return for being given access to the government’s devolution priority programme. Mellig added that she had never met or spoken to Reed.

A Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government spokesperson said Billig’s claims were untrue. “Norfolk’s place on the devolution priority programme has never been contingent on the timing of local authority elections and we remain committed to working with all local partners on mayoral devolution in Norfolk and Suffolk,” they said.

# County B

## Puzzled how Essex got “Green” Roads Rating?

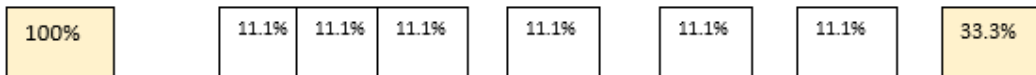
A record £7.3 billion of investment in road maintenance is helping to ensure that more cyclists across the country can have that smooth ride feeling

In addition, the Department for Transport (DfT) have launched a Red, Amber, Green rating system, so you can see how well your local highway authority is fixing your local roads.

- Green = best practice, long-term preventative plans
- Amber = on the way, but room to improve
- Red = support in place to raise standards

See how well your local authority is doing by checking the link in DfT's bio.

Local highway authority	Overall rating	Condition scorecard	Spend scorecard	Best practice scorecard	Metric 1 - A road condition	Metric 2 - B/C road condition	Metric 3 - U road condition	Metric 4 - preventative maintenance spend score, based on a measure of spend on preventative maintenance compared to reactive maintenance spend	Metric 5a - Red-rated roads to be resurfaced	Metric 5b - Green or Amber-rated roads to receive preventative treatment	Metric 6 - spend based on a measure of capital spend on highways maintenance compared to the highways maintenance block allocation	not providing evidence relating to areas of highways maintenance best practice [note 9]		
Essex	Green	Green	Green	Amber	81.5	82.0	80.0	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	33.3%	90.1	0



**Length of carriageway to be resurfaced or receive preventative treatments by local highway authority, 2025 to 2026, projected estimates**  
 This data was used to calculate metrics 5a and 5b, which contribute to the Best Practice scorecard element and the Overall rating. These are projected estimates for 2025 to 2026 provided by local highway authorities. Actual road lengths to be resurfaced or receive preventative treatments at the end of 2025 to 2026 may differ from these figures. This data has been transcribed manually from multiple sources, including transparency reports and direct contact with local highway authorities. Steps were taken to assure the quality of this dataset. Any remaining errors due to manual processes are expected to be minor, and do not affect the suitability of this data for use in calculating highways maintenance ratings. Figures have been converted from miles to km where necessary. Data has been rounded to the nearest 1km. In some cases, the figures in this dataset differ from those published in local highway authority transparency reports. Where differences exist, the figures provided directly by local highway authorities were used. These figures should not be compared across local highway authorities, because different local highway authorities have different road network lengths. Some shorthand is used in this table. [x] = data not available. [low] = a low value below 0.5km, but not 0km.

LHA	Length of carriageway to be resurfaced, 2025 to 2026 (projected, km)	Length of carriageway to receive preventative treatments, 2025 to 2026 (projected, km)
Essex	64	146

Under 1% of ECC roads projected      2% projected

Table 1. Roads, Footways, Public Rights of Way, and Cycleway lengths maintained by Essex County Council (ECC).

Lengths of highway, footways and cycleways (km)						
A Roads (*excluding A130)	B and C Roads	U Roads	Total Roads	Footways	Other Public rights of way	**Remote Cycleways
km	km	km	km	km	km	km
609	2,383	4,540	7,532	6,000	6,409	1.4

\*The A130 was built through a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and is maintained by an organisation called County Route. The length of the A130 is approximately 30.1 km.

Table 3. Annual Investment Levels, 2020/21 to 2025/26.

Year	Highway maintenance spending				
	Capital allocated by DfT (£,000s)	Capital spend (£,000s)	Revenue spend (£,000s)	*Estimate of % of Total Capital spent on preventative maintenance	*Estimate of % Total Revenue spent on reactive maintenance
2025/26 (projected)	52,265	111,095	40,258	78%	40%
2024/25	41,022	109,579	33,352	78%	40%
2023/24	46,334	95,428	28,357	73%	47%
2022/23	37,259	81,851	26,365	64%	47%
2021/22	37,009	80,237	26,805	67%	41%
2020/21	48,147	75,525	34,060	70%	39%

\*Calculated through detailed analysis of spend associated with each related highway maintenance activity. 'Preventative' maintenance is regarded as all capital funded maintenance that enhances asset life or replaces assets at end of life, with a view to making the network more resilient.

Maintenance Type	Sub-Categories
<b>Reactive Maintenance</b> (requiring unplanned intervention at localised level, such as pothole filling)	All assets - sign and make safe for safety purposes All assets - provide permanent repair for safety purposes, as budgets permit All assets - provide initial temporary repair for safety purposes
<b>Preventative/Routine Maintenance</b>	Carriageways, footways and cycle routes - minor works and patching Drainage systems, cleansing and repair Embankments and Cuttings – stabilisation works Landscaped Areas and Trees – environmental management Verges - grass cutting Fences and Barriers - tensioning and repair Traffic Signals and Bollards - repair Road Markings and Studs – asset replacement Lighting installations - repair Bridges and other structures - minor works

Table 6. Number of potholes filled annually since 2020/21 (source: Confirm asset management system in which pothole defects are recorded with date identified and date works completed)

Number of potholes filled				
2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
9293	6888	8221	13221	18636

Table 6a Number of potholes reported and outstanding for more than one year – there is NO Table 6a...

Is a very good job we don't measure NHS performance like this i.e.

- Spend on planned operations vs A&E
- Capped A&E spend at 40% – irrespective of demand
- Not a waiting list in sight...



# County C Buses no change

**NORTH ZONE**  
Finchingfield Gt Bardfield Panfield Rayne Salings Shalford Wethersfield

**BUS USER GROUP** *new UP*

Funded by Essex County Council LOVE YOUR BUS Grant

STUDENTS

FAMILIES

OLDER RESIDENTS

GROUPS OF FRIENDS  
(leaving the car at home)

#16 Chelmsford - Wethersfield  
DIGIGO  
#16 KonectBus

INDEPENDENT Cllrs Mark AULT Ann HOOKS and Michael STAINES

Status:	Decision Confirmed
Title:	Decision on the future of Local Bus Services with contracts expiring in July 2026
Is a Key Decision:	Yes
Stakeholder Involvement	A 12 week public consultation has been held
Date on which, or period within which, we expect the decision to be taken	Wed 28 Jan 2026

16 - Wethersfield - Chelmsford, Monday to Saturday	No change	7 general comments were received regarding this service, they covered: - a proposal to cut some of the middle journeys. - a proposal to remove the 11:50am out of Wethersfield and the 13:09pm out of Chelmsford. - a comment that the reliability of the bus showing up has gone down dramatically since a new provider took on the service. - a comment that roadworks severely impact the service.	ECC have considered the issues raised. ECC consider the current timetable to best meet the terms of the policy.  ECC will raise issues relating to the reliability of the service with the operator.	No change to the service.	All 8 journeys to be retained.
DigiGo - Braintree - Chelmsford, Monday to Sunday	Two changes are proposed, which relate to times and areas of operation.	37 responses were received. 15 agreed with both proposals, 14 disagreed with both proposals, 7 agreed with proposal 1 and 1 agreed with proposal 2.  1 respondent could not make their journey, 20 could still make their journey and 1 could still make their journey but it would be less convenient.	ECC has reviewed the responses and considered the growing level of usage. The re-design has been reconsidered and withdrawn. Patronage will need to continue to grow over the coming two years to secure the service for the future.	Not to proceed with the re-design. Continue to operate in-house by DigiGo. North zone redesign to incorporate parts of the DaRT 299 area - please see appendix C, service 299, for more details.	All times and areas of operation to be retained  N/A - service operated in-house

**REJECTED**

North Zone BUS USER GROUP  
9 February at 18:33

Please see the official extension of the DigiGo service until at least JUL 2028 - now to focus onto addressing user concerns and getting Visitors / Tourists to our w... See more

**DigiGo Service Extended!**

Until July 2028 digigo

DigiGo  
9 February at 17:20

North Zone Bus User Group – Spring Public meeting will be announced shortly...in the meantime what about doing this survey for you (or somebody else) +65years or with a disability?

[https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/EssexBusSurvey/?fbclid=IwY2xjawP1af9leHRuA2FlbQlxMABicmlkETAwbzVHaGNmbmhEd3lFMElZc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHpZbaO57wvMyf1n\\_trmgVaD\\_jtL6vs9k\\_IXCnvr2xrdA\\_RbiunGJjt8Bnc0\\_aem\\_n0eUsLdiEcGxyRwWAXj5wQ](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/EssexBusSurvey/?fbclid=IwY2xjawP1af9leHRuA2FlbQlxMABicmlkETAwbzVHaGNmbmhEd3lFMElZc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHpZbaO57wvMyf1n_trmgVaD_jtL6vs9k_IXCnvr2xrdA_RbiunGJjt8Bnc0_aem_n0eUsLdiEcGxyRwWAXj5wQ)

Funded by UK Government

ROCKET SCIENCE    essex    itp by Haskoning

SMARTSURVEY.CO.UK  
Research on Older and disabled people's bus use in Essex





## District : Local Plan Review

A 6 week consultation on the Preferred Sites and Policies agreed by Braintree District Full Council meeting on 2 Feb for period 2033 – 2041 will start shortly [expected 25 FEB 2026].

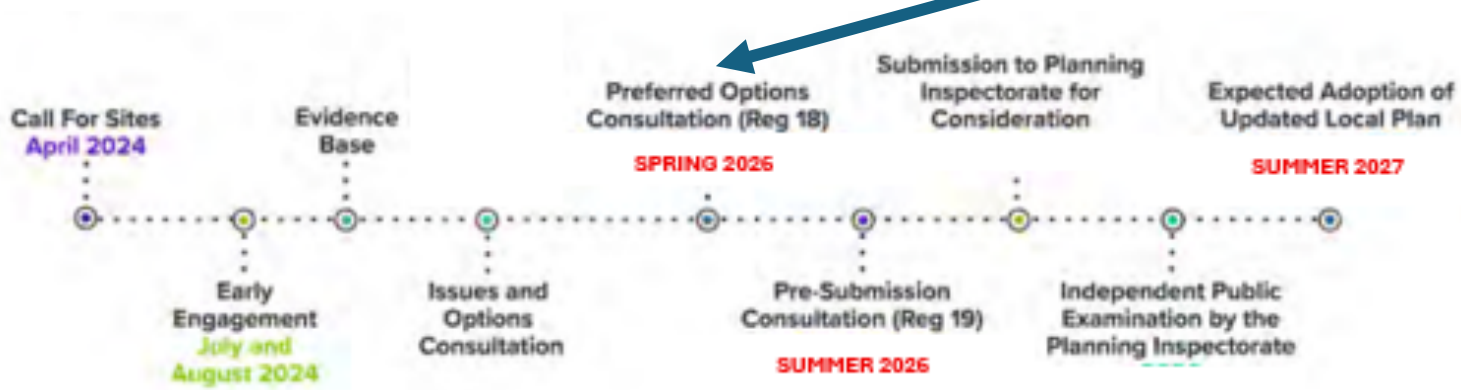
We will brief residents on how to contribute to BDC *and other groups* as necessary – response volumes are expected to be very high.

As this is likely to be BDC’s last Local Plan before being incorporated into a Unitary Authority – where planning decisions will devolved away from communities - we would like to see this consultation achieve the highest number of responses in BDC’s history.

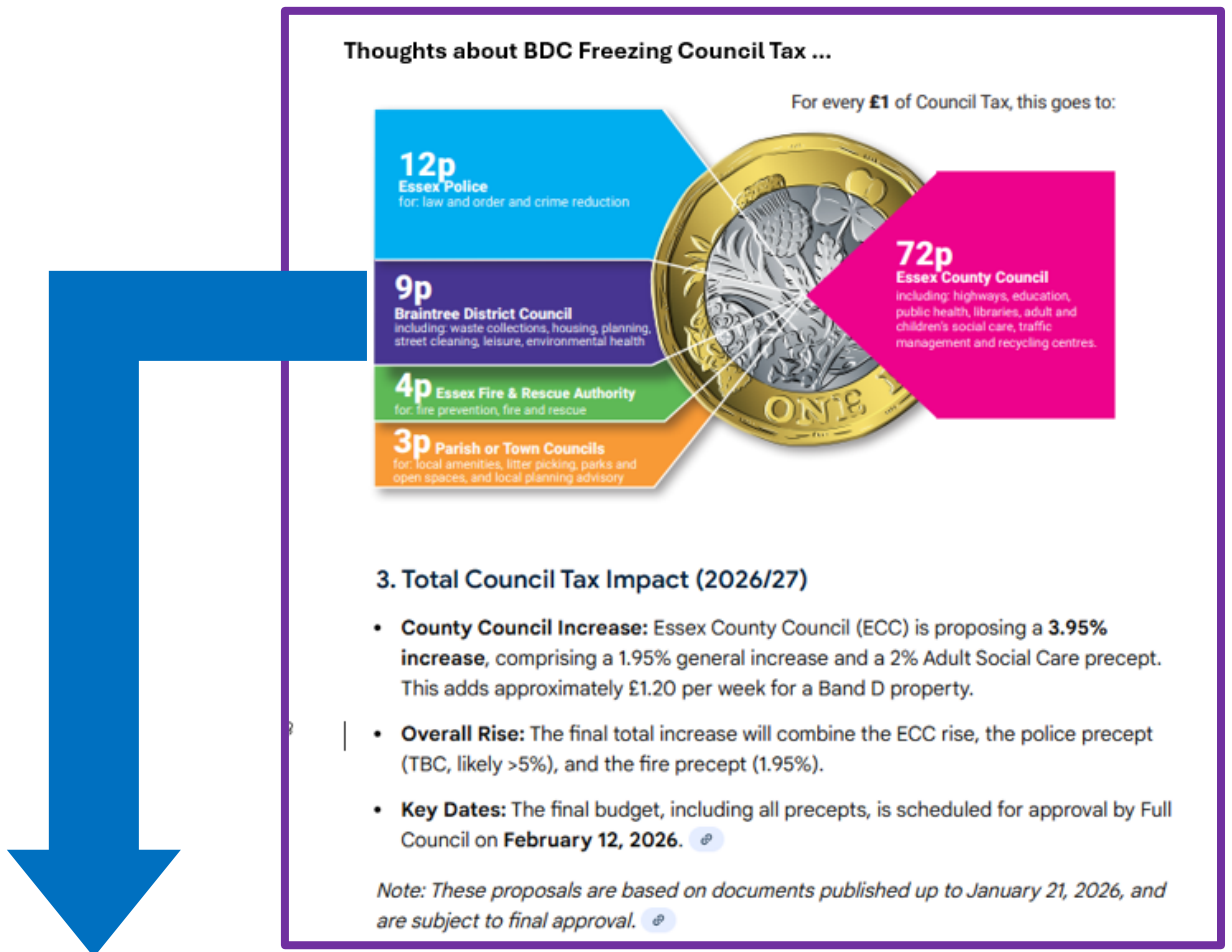
- BDC has been unable to push-back on the top-down UK Govt Housing target.
- BDC has been unable to secure planning or funding for A12 improvement or A12 – A120 dual link.
- BDC will be subject to more top-down National Planning Policy changes - which may affect the current preferred sites after the end of the public consultation and or before / during the Reg 19 Inspection process.
- The process will change completely again on the election of Mayor of Greater Essex currently in 2028 – but even if delayed – will still be BEFORE BDC’s last Local Plan is set to be implemented in 2033.

The current UK Govt deadline for approved District Plans remains is 31 DEC 2026.

BDC’s revised Local Plan Review timetable now looks like this



## District's Budget Proposal to freeze their small element of Council Tax was passed on MON 16 Feb 2026



### Will the freeze undermine longer-term resilience?

And make the jump to harmonized GECCA council Taxes bigger in future?

Prevent / delay planning and implementation of VITAL new Parishes ahead of Unitary (including in the new 3 Fields & Gt Notley Division)?

Enough put aside to push out Home Office Wethersfield and enforce if necessary?

Enough put aside to cover any issues with the emerging Local Plan and its >60% bet on one development; Kings Dene Kelvedon – to reach the UK Govt Target?



**District – The Home Office’s Special Development Order allowing the use of Wethersfield to accommodate Asylum seekers expires in Spring 2027....**

We will be sharing how residents can help expedite Home Office exit in the coming weeks - including participation in the Local Plan Review consultation : LPR 38 [Wethersfield Site development plan] and other opportunities too.

We will be supporting the referendum of the Finchingfield and Wethersfield Neighborhood Plan to ensure a resident lead development plan for entire Wethersfield site swiftly follows the Home Office exit.

