

**EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30pm on 11 JULY 2017**

Present: Councillor G Sell – Chairman.
Councillors K Artus, H Asker, G Barker, S Barker, J Davey, P Davies, A Dean, P Fairhurst, T Farthing, M Foley, J Freeman, R Freeman, A Gerard, N Hargreaves, S Howell, D Jones, G LeCount, P Lees, M Lemon, B Light, J Lodge, J Loughlin, A Mills, S Morris, E Oliver, V Ranger, J Redfern, H Rolfe and H Ryles.

Officers in attendance: D French (Chief Executive), D Barden (Communications Manager), R Dobson (Principal Democratic Services Officer), R Fox (Planning Policy Team Leader), G Glenday (Assistant Director – Planning) and S Pugh (Head of Legal Services).

Public Speaking

Statements were made by Chris Audritt, Andy Dodsley, Vincent Thompson, Jane Goodwin, Ken McDonald and Mike Young. Copies or summaries of the statements made are appended to these minutes.

C23

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anjum, Chambers, Felton, Goddard, Harris, Hicks, Knight and Wells.

The Chairman reminded members that the Head of Legal Services had given advice that there was no necessity for members to declare as an interest their membership of town or parish councils.

Councillor S Barker declared an interest in that she was a member of Essex County Council.

Councillor Redfern said as a member of Great Chesterford Parish Council she felt it was necessary for her to declare an interest.

Councillor Dean said he wished to declare an interest in that his wife was a volunteer at the Gardens of Easton Lodge.

C24

DRAFT UTTLESFORD LOCAL PLAN

The Chairman welcomed all members and those members of the public in attendance, as well as those listening to the broadcast.

The Chairman said the only remaining item on the agenda was to give consideration to the recommendation of the Cabinet, at the meeting held last

Thursday, to publish the draft Local Plan for consultation in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. All members had been given a copy of the full draft Local Plan under consideration at this meeting. It was also available, in full, on the Council's website.

The Chairman said members should note carefully that the decision to be made this evening was whether or not the draft Local Plan should be put out to consultation. If members felt it was not ready, they could vote against the recommendation. If members had reservations about particular aspects of the plan, they would have the opportunity to make representations during the consultation period. They would then be able to vote on the Plan when it returned to Council with the consultation outcome.

Councillor R Freeman said he would be proposing an amendment under Rule 11, and at the request of the Chairman provided in written form the amendment, so that a decision about when to take the amendment could be made.

The Chairman invited Councillor S Barker to speak.

Councillor S Barker presented the draft Local Plan for the regulation 18 consultation. She thanked officers for the great amount of work involved. There were three main parts to the consultation, housing allocations, employment allocations and the development of management policies. The consultation under regulation 18 was the opportunity to comment. She assured members and the public listening that every comment would be read and responded to. She explained that the document before members this evening had been amended to reflect minor changes which had been presented to Cabinet last week.

Councillor S Barker went on to say that a new settlement or settlements, following the Council's agreement in March 2016 as potential way of delivering its housing numbers, were now a reality of the draft Local Plan. Housing numbers had been arrived at by the consultants, ORS, using 2014 data, for the whole of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMAA) area, Epping Forest, East Herts, Harlow and Uttlesford District Councils. The number of homes needed was 14,100 per year. This was an enormous number of new homes, but it was important to recall that the Inspector had previously said the number in the East Herts plan had been insufficient because they were not taking account of the 2014 figures. Whilst far higher than anticipated, the figure of 14,100 was the one which had to be considered: the requirement to use the 2014 figures had been cited in the Inspector's comments on the East Herts plan, and had been recommended to this authority by planning inspectors and retained counsel. The figures for other neighbour authorities were all higher, but for Uttlesford were also challenging in percentage terms as against Uttlesford's base population. However, these numbers represented homes for the neighbours and children of people living in Uttlesford.

The Council had between 2011-16 built almost 500 new homes a year. In addition 4,513 planning permissions for dwellings as at March 2016 had been granted. The Council had built 70 homes a year from windfall allowance. The

balance of the supply would be Garden Community sites which were planned with capacity to be 1800 at Easton Park, 1900 in North Uttlesford and 970 at the site West of Braintree.

In proposing the settlements, officers had considered all three sites were needed to ensure a robust plan to deliver during the plan period and beyond it. All these allocations would result in infrastructure needs, including schools, water, health, open areas, broadband and 4G connectivity. Members were reminded that the National Planning Policy Framework set out economic, social and environmental themes which had to be met to realise sustainable development as well as home-grown jobs.

The policies since the last Local Plan had substantially changed, and therefore the Local Plan consultation provided opportunities to comment on the proposed sites in light of these policies. Councillor S Barker said she believed the draft Local Plan would deliver on housing needs. She proposed the motion.

Councillor Rolfe seconded the motion.

The Chairman invited Councillor R Freeman to speak regarding the amendment which had been circulated.

Councillor R Freeman proposed the amendment, which would add wording to the substantive motion, as follows: "This council agrees that residents' concerns emerging from this consultation will be noted and acted upon. Larger developments, especially the new 'Garden Villages', will be constructed with sufficient infrastructure to be independent of nearby communities. The Council will also take the necessary measures to ensure close and ongoing engagement and collaboration with developers and the communities."

Councillor Rolfe said all members could agree with the spirit of this amendment. This consultation was a genuine one. He was committed to proceeding on garden development principles. In terms of engagement, public meetings were already set up to ensure continual dialogue between developers, communities and the authority. Regarding the phrase "will be noted and acted upon", he would prefer to add "where possible".

Members made various suggestions as to how the amendment could be phrased.

Councillor Dean said he shared the concerns expressed by Councillor Rolfe, and suggested the wording "noted and taken into account". However the final sentence of the amendment was redundant in that the obligation described was implicit already.

Councillor Lees said it was important that members of the public should be assured that any sound point raised could be acted upon.

Councillor Gordon said he had difficulty with the phrase "acted upon", it was not possible to please everyone, and "take account of", or "be considered" was better. He also questioned what was meant by "sufficient infrastructure".

Councillor Artus welcomed the amendment, including the reference to sufficient infrastructure. He suggested “practicable” would meet the intention.

Councillor Fairhurst said it was a tall order to suggest that residents’ concerns could all be simply acted upon.

Councillor S Barker sought clarification as to which wording Councillor R Freeman wished to propose. She asked that the phrase “garden communities” be used rather than “garden villages”.

Following further comments about the wording, Councillor R Freeman, with the agreement of the seconder to the amendment, Councillor Lodge, read out the revised amendment to the substantive motion as follows:

“This council agrees that residents’ concerns emerging from this consultation will be noted and acted upon where practicable. Larger developments, especially the new ‘Garden Communities’, will be constructed with sufficient infrastructure to be independent of nearby communities. The Council will also take the necessary measures to ensure close and ongoing engagement and collaboration with developers and the communities.”

Councillor Redfern said she felt the amendment was unnecessary because she had been assured throughout the process that the whole idea was to be cross-party and inclusive.

Councillor Lodge said he would speak as seconder of the amendment.

Councillor Asker said the whole point was that the significance of regulation 18 would not be clear to everyone, and the amendment was to ensure that everyone could understand what this whole process was about.

Councillor Lodge said he was encouraged by the fact that the majority of the Council accepted the spirit of the amendment. He felt the pain of the potential development, and regretted that 14,100 houses had to be built. The Council was doing this because it had to. People should respond to the regulation 18 consultation, which he had promoted.

The Chief Executive said, if carried, the amendment would follow on from the wording of the substantive motion.

The altered amendment was put, as follows.

“This council agrees that residents’ concerns emerging from this consultation will be noted and acted upon where practicable. Larger developments, especially the new ‘Garden Communities’, will be constructed with sufficient infrastructure to be independent of nearby communities. The Council will also take the necessary measures to ensure close and ongoing engagement and collaboration with developers and the communities.”

The amendment was carried.

The Chairman opened the debate on the substantive motion.

Councillor Foley said he appreciated the great efforts and significant work of officers. He was concerned that land at Carver Barracks, which was not yet available, was not included in the draft Local Plan. He was also concerned at the prospect of large developments in the South of the district. He accepted bigger settlements could be preferable to “bolting on” smaller developments to existing settlements, but it was important to resist opportunistic developments which were given the “garden” label. The Council still didn’t have a “Plan B”, which seemed like predetermination.

Councillor S Barker said at this stage there could not be a “Plan B”. The Council was trying to find 640 homes a year, and if residents came up with reasonable suggestions in consultation then it would look at those.

Councillor Redfern said she agreed officers and the Planning Policy Working Group were delivering what they could. She found the prospect of three settlements challenging. One was in her area. Having the regulation 18 consultation was helpful. As member for Great Chesterford, she had great concern about the effect on the area. She encouraged all residents from the area to attend the forthcoming community meeting, and to take part in the consultation. It was unreasonable to act as if North Uttlesford was not part of Great Chesterford. She would like the proposals to include a green belt around the village to avoid predatory development.

Councillor Ranger said he also echoed the thanks expressed by other members to the planning policy team and the Working Group, as well as to the many hundreds of people who had contacted him. He requested that responses be given to all who participated in the consultation, but asked also that those taking part should treat the consultation as a narrative, and read everything from start to finish. He urged all consultees to consider the past, present and future, with regard to benefits that well thought out planning could bring to future generations, including supporting close family links. The Plan deserved members’ support.

Councillor Redfern said she represented six parish councils, most of which had had their July meeting and would not usually meet in August. She would like to see the consultation extended slightly.

Councillor Fairhurst said the Local Plan had come a long way. He was keen to see a hybrid scheme, which was evidence-based. There was still a long way to go. A number of issues had yet to be resolved, including air quality and housing numbers. This draft Local Plan was not a fait accompli. Members were here tonight to vote whether to go to regulation 18 consultation, not preconceived detail. The process was about listening, asking and considering. He asked that people give it an open mind.

Councillor Lees said Elsenham and Henham had taken part in previous consultation, which was again important to this process. She agreed with the

comment from Councillor Redfern regarding the duration of the consultation, since many parish councils did not meet in August.

Councillor Hargreaves said, with reference to the point made by Mr McDonald and Mr Young, that calculation of the housing need figure of 14,100 should be tested. It was clear this Council did not have an auditable figure, despite his having requested this information many times. He did not understand why the calculations could not be made available, so that the validity of the figures could be checked. The figure looked high, and did not appear to him to be right, in which case it could make a difference to the areas potentially affected.

Councillor S Barker said ORS had presented to workshops on a number of occasions, but it was necessary for members to turn up to such events.

Councillor Hargreaves said he wanted the information, in a format for studying, not a powerpoint.

Councillor Morris asked for clarity on the version of the local plan document before members, as there were some changes from the one she had been working with as part of the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Planning team. In particular there were some significant differences in relation to the section on sports facilities, a subject she had a keen interest in. The document was not marked as a separate version.

Councillor Rolfe said there had been a series of changes put forward at the Planning Policy Working Group which had gone to Cabinet. Such changes had been included in the new version of the draft Local Plan before members. He confirmed this document was the version which would be the subject of the Regulation 18 consultation.

Councillor Dean said he supported the recommendation before Council. It had been a long and tortuous journey. The district was now asked to consider the draft Local Plan, and it was the Council's job to listen and act accordingly. This was a serious set of proposals and a shift from the initial plan. The initial one in 1990 proposed mainly sites on brownfield land, but little of such land remained available now. There was a housing crisis. Some areas would have to change. He saw no credible alternative to three garden communities. Councillors had been ably assisted by officers. Last Autumn the numbers had increased again, and so there were three sites, but it turned out that all three were needed. He had had many emails giving views on why these sites should not be chosen. He would ask that people should also consider what they wanted if a new community did go ahead. That way the area would get the best possible outcome. The reason he had abstained from supporting the amendment was that it dealt only with concerns, and didn't address the positives. He looked forward to improvements in the draft Local Plan, and invited fellow councillors to support the motion in putting the draft Local Plan to consultation.

Councillor Mills said he had been a member of the Planning Policy Working Group, and followed the process throughout. He was a member for Felsted and Stebbing, and he supported the draft Local Plan, this was the best solution. He had some sympathy regarding the question of clarification of the right numbers

for delivery of housing. He did not like numbers to be rounded up, but he suspected the figure was about right. The transport study had not considered the impact of developments at Great Leighs, or Marks Tey, or the potential increase in passengers at Stansted Airport to 33 million passengers per year. How this factor would impact on Junction 8 was not clear. The spatial strategy only put 44 in the Class A villages, and there might be scope, but this was a working document. Finally, regarding the need for three settlements, this provision gave some leeway. Uttlesford had succeeded up to now in building 500 houses per year, and had maintained a five year land supply. He supported the resolution.

Councillor Loughlin said she would vote for the resolution because in a democracy there was a need to consult people. Whilst the parish councils would not be sitting during the consultation period, this was not a parish council subject, and the consultation was for everyone. Everyone deserved a voice. In relation to the point raised by Councillor Morris, she said the agenda pack referred to the modifications to the document as considered at Cabinet last week. The modified document included reference to provision of open spaces and playing pitches facilities.

Councillor Rolfe thanked colleagues for the maturity of the debate and cross-party unanimity. Members knew of the Council's statutory responsibilities and the consequences of failing to fulfil them. There was also a moral case. Reference had been made to legacy, as a council preparing for the future. Nationally there was a housing crisis. Fortunately Uttlesford did not face that kind of crisis. Nevertheless, if the Council didn't create homes, then it would not be undertaking its duty. The numbers were a sensitive issue. There were four authorities in the SHMAA, and the consultant company, ORS, which was considered expert by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), had advised on the figures. There was detail for people to read if they wished. When the draft Local Plan had been unsuccessful in December 2014, he had forcefully made the point to the Minister, Brandon Lewis MP, that numbers must be correctly given in order for the Council to work from them. Since then, the Council had had very good support from DCLG, two inspectors, the council's own QC and also could take note of what was happening in East Herts, all of which pointed to a figure of 14,100. He felt the pain: he had lived in one of the villages affected for 37 years. He recognised that this development should take place throughout Uttlesford. It was inappropriate that all of it should go in the South of the district. He understood why officers had come to the recommendations that they had. Regarding the length of time of the consultation, Cabinet had extended it until 4 September, nearly a week more. This was in his view sufficient time for those interested to respond. Regarding Carver Barracks, the intention of the Army was not to vacate the site until 2031, so clearly it could not be part of this Plan.

Regarding the amendment, he was happy to support it, but wanted to emphasise, that those intentions had always been there. The new development would be carried out according to garden community principles. This was an iterative process. Junction 8 was a key factor. These aspects were part of the next phase. This was about a consultation, it was not a planning application. He encouraged colleagues to support the recommendation.

Councillor G Barker requested that the question be put.

The Chairman agreed. He said he agreed with Councillor Rolfe's comment that this serious matter had been debated with maturity. It was a privilege to live in the district, and like others, he was very conscious of the significance of the decision before members tonight.

Councillor S Barker summed up. She said the debate had been adequate. It was necessary to go to consultation and to hear the views of the public. In terms of the vote, if there was not a unanimous show of hands, she requested a recorded vote.

Councillor Foley said Councillor Rolfe had referred to a moral responsibility. He understood that, but the Council also had a moral responsibility to protect the countryside as well as agricultural land, to protect food security for the future.

The Chairman reminded members of the original recommendation and the amendment which was now part of the substantive motion. He reminded members of the public that it was pertinent to suggest any improvements they would like to see when responding to the consultation. This was a meaningful consultation, views would be listened to.

The resolution was put to the vote and carried, with one member voting against.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the draft Local Plan be published in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012;
- 2 that residents' concerns emerging from this consultation will be noted and acted upon where practicable. Larger developments, especially the new 'Garden Communities', will be constructed with sufficient infrastructure to be independent of nearby communities. The Council will also take the necessary measures to ensure close and ongoing engagement and collaboration with developers and the communities.

The meeting ended at 9.05pm.

Public speaking statements

Statement of Chris Audritt (overleaf)

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 11TH JULY 2017

LOCAL PLAN PRESENTATION

Speaker - Chris Audritt

SPEAKING AS A RESIDENT OF LITTLE EASTON AND UNTIL RECENTLY A PARISH COUNCILLOR THIS IS NOT JUST ABOUT LITTLE EASTON.

IT IS ABOUT THE IMPACT ON THE WHOLE AREA OF A DEVELOPMENT OF THIS SIZE AND THE EFFECT IT WILL HAVE ON GREAT DUNMOW AND THE SURROUNDING AREA FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

THE INCLUSION OF EASTON PARK IN THIS LOCAL PLAN IS THE WORST OF BOTH WORLDS.

THE 1800 HOUSES IN THIS PLAN PERIOD WOULD CREATE AN ISOLATED NON SUSTAINABLE SETTLEMENT WITH HOUSES DELIVERED SLOWLY IF THE EXPERIENCE WITH LAND SEC AT EBBSFLEET IS ANYTHING TO GO BY.

THE PROPOSAL FOR 10000 HOUSES AT EASTON PARK AND THE 3000 HOUSES EITHER INCLUDED IN THE NEW LOCAL PLAN, OR WITH PLANNING PERMISSION BUT YET TO BE BUILT IN GREAT DUNMOW, WILL CREATE AN URBAN SPRAWL FROM GREAT DUNMOW ALONG THE STORTFORD ROAD TO EASTON PARK AND ON TO LITTLE CANFIELD, TAKLEY AND TOWARDS BISHOPS STORTFORD.

WHAT IS OF REAL CONCERN IS THAT UDC HAVE LEARNT NOTHING FROM THE PREVIOUS FAILED LOCAL PLAN WHERE ELSHAM WAS PURSUED DESPITE ALL THE OBVIOUS PROBLEMS WHICH THE INSPECTOR HIGHLIGHTED IMMEDIATELY.

UDC COMMISSIONED AN INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY PLAN FROM TROY PLANNING, IN MAY 17, WHICH SPECIFICALLY SAID TWO ACCESS POINTS ARE REQUIRED FOR EASTON PARK AND WITHOUT THEM ACCESS TO EASTON PARK IS A RISK TO SCHEME DELIVERY.

HOWEVER AT THE 22ND JUNE PPWG MR FOX FROM UDC AND THE ESSEX HIGHWAYS REP BOTH SAID THERE WOULD ONLY BE ONE VEHICLE ACCESS

PARK ROAD HAS ALREADY BEEN EXCLUDED BY LAND SEC AND UDC AS A VEHICLE ACCESS POINT – COUNCILLOR ROLFE EVEN SAYING AT THE PPWG IN MAY IT WOULD

Statement of Andy Dodsley (overleaf)

At the Parish Forum last week, there was wide disbelief from local people that the development of two major sites along the A120 corridor – 20,000 new houses and an additional 6000 car journeys at peak time – will not totally overwhelm our already congested transport infrastructure.

Councillors from many parish councils, not just those directly impacted by the proposed developments, expressed their concerns that the transport study vastly underplays the impact that these developments will have upon the local road network – particularly the A120 and Junction 8 of the M11. Villages are already used as rat-runs to avoid the existing traffic issues around the district and these plans will lead to a huge increase in congestion.

Does the council seriously believe that they will be able to generate a so called “modal shift” in transport habits whereby people in rural areas will move away from their cars? We don’t think so.

Little Easton Parish are determined to preserve our heritage for future generations and we believe that the proposed Easton Park development is the wrong development in the wrong place and if it happens will deliver urban sprawl from Great Dunmow to Stansted Airport filling in all the open countryside, more than trebling the size of Dunmow from 3800 to 17000 houses with a further 10,000 just down the A120 at Stebbing.

It will deliver the irreversible destruction of the settings of vast numbers of listed heritage assets – So many in fact that they could not all be accommodated in the heritage impact assessment for Easton Park and were not individually assessed in the same way as all the other sites – An approach we still disagree with and will continue to challenge.

This proposal will have an enormous detrimental impact on this area’s unique identity, exceptional rural setting and wildlife, which unquestionably goes against the National Planning Policy Framework.

It will deliver the destruction of an historic deer park - concreted over by 10,000 homes. Once it’s concreted over – it’s gone forever.

A wonderful dark sky landscape will be blighted by light pollution.

Valuable agricultural land will be gone forever

This is more than just a blight on the local area – it is the total destruction of it.

Your vote today is a critical stage in the process. You are merely the current caretakers of our district and what you do now will affect this area long after you are gone.

Before voting today, I would urge you to consider the legacy that you will be leaving – Is your legacy to future generations to be the paving over of our heritage, and the creation of creeping urban sprawl and travel chaos?

I hope you will agree that it isn’t a legacy to be proud of.

Statement of Vincent Thompson (overleaf)

VT to UDC PPWG on 22 June 17

Councillors.

I address you on behalf of the Residents Action Group, **STOP EASTON PARK.**

I am concerned. Concerned that:

- You are encouraged to vote in favour of proposals that are deeply unsympathetic to the rural nature of our District;
- That the Local Plan lacks detail in key areas;
- That the drop-in exhibitions are limited to three and a half hours each;
- And that the public have only six weeks in which to respond.

In short, the cart has been put before the horse to fit a predetermined plan. And now these proposals are being forced on your electorate, your tax payers without due process or consultation.

As you know it is the Inspector who must decide whether or not the Plan is 'sound'. Your attention has been focused on a narrow, legalistic definition of the word 'sound'. But I am advised that the Inspector's primary obligation is to use his judgement or what some might call common sense.

So, using your common sense, before you vote, I ask you to consider:-

- Does it make sense to embark on building a New Town of 10,000 houses for maybe 30,000 people so close to a major airport?
- In line of the prevailing wind with the attendant health issues?
- Under a major flight path with resultant noise issues?
- Directly alongside a working quarry?

Statement of Jane Goodwin

I am a parish councillor for Stebbing Parish Council. We are disappointed at the recommendation for the sites located at land West of Braintree as a Garden

Community. The land has been identified by Braintree District Council and seems to have been simply accepted by Uttlesford. Residents of Stebbing who have raised concerns have been told in patronising tones that they are NIMBYs. Stebbing is an established community, those living there fully accept aspects of living in the countryside such as erratic internet connection. We chose not to be urban dwellers. Residents deserve to continue the lifestyle they chose. Stebbing Parish Council has been told there would be consolation with various offers such as bypass, but we feel a greater responsibility to preserve the rural area for future generations. If a bypass is a genuine inducement, why isn't everyone demanding one elsewhere? Existing smaller scale development had already been proposed, but now the proposal for a Garden Community has come forward. You as a council may be relieved about that prospect: we are not.

Statement of Ken McDonald

Good evening. My name is Ken McDonald. I have lived in Uttlesford for 36 years. I am a Chartered Accountant and was for many years a financial director and company secretary. I am accustomed to working with figures and words, and I understand the concepts of auditing and audit trails.

At last week's Cabinet meeting, we heard councillors say that the housing numbers were much higher than expected. Rather than shrugging shoulders, shouldn't somebody other than me be ringing alarm bells? It may seem very late in the construction process to be questioning the soundness of the foundations, but I have been raising specific and detailed concerns about the Strategic Housing Market Assessment – the "SHMA" - for the last 20 months. When do you stop trying to save a drowning man?

Sadly, after getting not a glimmer of satisfaction from UDC, I hold out very little hope that anyone will take these matters seriously until I spell out the deficiencies for the benefit of the Inspector. That's a pretty sad indictment of Uttlesford's claims to consult and to welcome constructive comment.

Time and time again I have heard statements that your plan is evidence-based yet, whilst I have seen "evidence", some of it logical and some not, I have not seen how it has been taken into account or how the housing targets for Uttlesford have been derived. Have you?

Sadly, the only evidence is inference, hearsay and Chinese whispers – but no audit trail. As Mr Glenday remarked in January, there is a need to "show your workings".

But we have still not seen any workings that demonstrate how Uttlesford's housing need forecasts have been calculated.

Last week, when Mr Fox was asked to comment on my repeated complaint, rather than offer workings, he claimed that the SHMA had been reviewed by several eminent people.

But, as far as I am aware, those reviewers were not given a copy of my detailed challenges and my "demolition" of some of the weaknesses and deficiencies in

the SHMA. So, the reviewers' verdict of "innocent" came after hearing only the evidence for the defence, but not the evidence for the prosecution.

One of those reviews was carried out by the Planning Advisory Service in December 2016. Rather than endorsing the Plan, I would say it was rather damning. Mr Glenday's remarks about the need to "show workings" echoed one of their recommendations.

Yet we still have not seen any workings; there is no audit trail – one of the failings that led to the rejection of the 2014 Plan.

In this vacuum of evidence, can you really endorse a Plan that will commit Uttlesford to percentage population growth faster than ever seen before, and faster than almost every other district in the country?

Statement of Michael Young

The most critical figure in the Local Plan is that for housing need. Some of us have been questioning the calculations for over 18 months. No-one understands them, no-one can follow them and no-one can explain them. We are told that the results have been confirmed by independent experts – but what did they say? A consultant from the Planning Advisory Service said that the apportionment to Uttlesford was "not clear" and he could find "no explanation". The QC said that work needed to be strengthened and the Inspector from the Planning Inspectorate said the report "didn't show its workings", "the process wasn't clear" and you couldn't tell whether it was right or wrong. Why are these comments being dismissed and ignored?

I can't say whether the figures are right or wrong and neither can these paid consultants. So why are councillors so sure?

The final test to any calculation must be – does it look reasonable? The proposed expansion for Uttlesford is one of the largest in the country and far greater than our neighbours'. Can this be right? The only response we get from the council is to be told that the exercise is transparent and evidence-based. Neither is true.

We need councillors who are prepared to think outside the cliché and challenge these results.

I will give one example where the figures are clearly wrong. The figure for extra employment at Stansted airport is given as 8,000. But no consultant has ever been asked to check this figure and the correct figure is at least 5,000 fewer jobs. I can say this with confidence since it is taken from a consultant's report that was paid for by the airport and supporting organisations.

This overstatement of jobs was first pointed out to the Working Group in November 2015 and despite being regularly repeated has been continually ignored.

I am sure we will be told that this is a consultation exercise and will be given the predictable reassurances about all comments being taken into consideration. But how can we be confident that comments made in the next eight weeks will receive any more attention than those ignored over the last twenty months?

The Plan as drafted will totally transform the nature of our district. Is that what you want? I would submit that only if you are certain that all the figures are correct and can be fully justified can you vote in favour. Otherwise you must ask for it go back to the Working Party to be properly validated.