

COUNCIL MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 8 APRIL 2014 at 7.30pm

Present: Councillor E Hicks – Chairman.
Councillors G Barker, S Barker, R Chambers, J Cheetham, J Davey, P Davies, A Dean, R Eastham, K Eden, I Evans, M Felton, M Foley, J Freeman, E Godwin, S Harris, S Howell, D Jones, A Ketteridge, J Ketteridge, T Knight, R Lemon, K Mackman, J Menell, D Morson, E Oliver, E Parr, J Parry, D Perry, V Ranger, J Redfern, J Rich, H Rolfe, J Rose, J Salmon, L Smith, A Walters, D Watson and L Wells.

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Millership (Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive – Legal), R Harborough (Director of Public Services), A Taylor (Assistant Director Planning and Building Control and A Webb (Director of Corporate Services).

C69 ANOUNCEMENT

The Council stood in memory of Councillor John Hurwitz who had been a member of the District Council for 25 years and Chairman of the Council between 1978 – 1980.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the proceedings were being sound recorded and live streamed on the internet.

C70 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Statements were made from seven members of the public. Copies of these statements are attached to these minutes.

C71 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Artus, J Asker, C Cant, J Loughlin and D Sadler.

Councillor Ranger declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 10 (ii) as he was acting as an agent in relation to a current planning application.

Councillor Barker declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of Essex County Council.

Councillors Redfern declared a non-pecuniary interest as she had recently submitted a planning application.

UTTLESFORD LOCAL PLAN – PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

The Leader introduced this item. He said the preparation of the local plan had been a long process, which had started in 2006. The frequent changes in Government advice had resulted in a number of variations during that time but Uttlesford was now on the threshold of adopting a new plan.

The Assistant Director Planning and Building Control gave a short presentation to explain the background to the plan preparation and the next stage in the process.

Councillor Barker, the Cabinet member for Environment thanked the members of the public for making their statements.

She asked the council to endorse the plan as sound. The plan had been worked on for many years and there had been a number of consultations. The most recent had been in January 2014 on the identified new sites to meet the requirement of 523 new market and affordable homes a year.

She explained that the Local Plan Working Group had considered many strategies and policies, which formed the supporting information for the plan. The types of housing required had been established through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), locations had been included in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and had been assessed in terms of sustainability, suitability and deliverability.

The working group had considered the representations received from the consultations and as a result some changes had been made to the proposals.

She explained that Uttlesford had limited brownfield land, which was why it was necessary to build on green field land but not on the green belt. The document included an infrastructure plan for the sites, so that developers would be aware of what was required at an early stage.

The next stage of the consultation would ask whether certain legal tests had been met and if the plan was sound. The Inspector would consider a number of questions about the preparation of the plan, including whether it had been based on the objectively assessed need, was consistent with the NPPF, was the most appropriate strategy and could be effectively delivered. Councillor Barker said she wanted to see the character of Uttlesford preserved and considered the best way to do this was to have a plan in place to enable development to be controlled.

Councillor Barker moved that the Council accept the recommendations in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Rose.

Councillor Eastham said he understood that houses were needed in the southeast and that the Government would force councils to build if the local plan did not demonstrate adequate provision. At the moment the council was in a position to could decide where to build. His main question was how he could be

assured that all the requirements of the S106 agreement for education, highways and health would be properly fulfilled and in place before the houses were built.

Councillor Morson said he represented Elsenham and Henham but his comments concerned the entire district. He was puzzled why North East Elsenham had been chosen as the site for the largest development when a recent application for 800 houses had been refused planning permission. He questioned why the district was continuing with this site and with this developer at the exclusion of anything else. He referred to false information, which he felt had been given about the employment potential and merits of the site.

He said it would be difficult for the council to justify this plan before the Inspector. The Elsenham site had not been recommended by an officer. It had been turned down on a number of occasions since 2007 as the ecotown proposal, and now through recent planning applications. The plan was not fair or equitable, as Elsenham had already taken a large proportion of development. He questioned the use of arable land that appeared to be the main basis of the plan.

He was concerned that the deliberation of these issues had not been open to the public. The minutes of Local Plan Working Group had not been available to the pre-scrutiny meeting in November 2013.

He stated that when the plan was revised in 2011 he had voted for the dispersal option in principle, but since then residents had never had the opportunity to discuss the merits of the different sites.

Councillor Parr said that tonight she was asking members of the council to help save the district and to listen to public concerns. It wasn't just her area that was affected but other parts of the district, particularly Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow. The plan proposals were not backed up by evidence. The plan was now being rushed through after years of indecision. She questioned the point of a consultation when the responses were ignored. It appeared that the council hadn't listened to the people and this was just a tick box exercise.

She pointed out that this was the last chance for members to show their feelings about the local plan. She stood by the decision of the Liberal Democrats not to attend the Local Plan Working Group meetings. The development of the plan should not have been a discussion just amongst councillors. The process should have been open to members of the public.

She asked that a recorded vote be taken on this item.

Councillor Rose referred to the desperate need for more affordable shared ownership/rented properties for local people who wished to live and work in the district. Houses prices had soared and he himself had waited 15 years for a key worker house. He was pleased that following the 2012 consultation the number of new houses proposed in Newport had been reduced and was now at a sustainable level. He thought that the dispersal option would ensure that houses were available across the district and the plan would provide affordable houses where people wanted them.

Councillor Ranger said the plan met all the requirements, it was sound, it allocated land for various uses, provided houses of different sizes and types and set out the infrastructure requirements.

He felt that if the Local Plan Working Group meetings had been held in public nothing would have been decided. It was necessary for sensitive matters to be deliberated in private. At all the local plan meetings he had attended the underlying theme was the question - is the plan sound? Over the years the Government had moved the goal posts, the council had to respond and to produce a plan that considered the district as a whole.

He pointed out that the plan would provide positive policies for the district. For example every new development of more than one dwelling would be required to make a contribution towards affordable housing.

He explained that Uttlesford had retained its housing stock and was one of the few local authorities to be building its own houses. However, this was only a small number and with an increasing population, the council had to ensure there was an on going supply of new houses.

Councillor Howell said this issue had been on the agenda throughout the seven years he had been on the council. There had been recognition of a need for more houses, but not here in Uttlesford.

He explained that over the past decade the population had been growing at its fastest ever rate but the country had not been building a corresponding number of houses. Prices had soared, mortgages were 5 times salary and not affordable for many people. The rate of house building was significantly lower than in the 1970's, and housing associations had not taken up the slack of council house building. Uttlesford also had particular local pressures, being near to Cambridge, London, Stansted Airport and being an attractive place to live.

The new plan was required to provide a realistic projection of population growth and government guidance on this had changed over the preparation period.

The council could only consider sites that had been put forward by the owners of the land. For the Government, the absence of infrastructure was not a consideration when assessing the sites, nor was the issue of traffic congestion – these were to be tackled later within the S106 agreement.

The council was required to take account of the guidance it received. He said the council would only do something that was so deeply unpopular because the consequence of not doing so was much worse. He would make a decision tonight, which might be unpalatable, but he considered it to be the best for the district as a whole.

He did not believe the process had been rushed. It had at times been frustrating for members and the public but the consequence of not approving this plan would be to fall back to reliance on the NPPF which would lead to uncontrolled development of the district.

Councillor Evans said the available evidence did not substantiate the claims made in the report. There was no evidence based plan to assess the cumulative impact of the increase in traffic. The consequences, schools at capacity, congestion etc, had not been taken properly into account. A rubber-stamping meeting of the Cabinet had followed the Local Plan Working Group on 31 March. This had prevented any debate with the public and the parish councils. She questioned the detailed evidence for the proposed sites and said the plan was being voted in regardless of the consequences.

Councillor Menell commented that she had attended 95% of the Local Plan Working Group meetings and the decisions had been difficult. The Liberal Democrats had not helped the process in any way. They could have been involved in shaping the final decision but had chosen not to. Councillor Lemon added that by disassociating from the process they had disenfranchised themselves and the people they represented.

Councillor Mackman did not think the plan was compliant with all legislation. In the consultation response 98% had expressed opposition and this had been ignored. The infrastructure requirements had not been thought through and there was evidence that some sites were not acceptable. The evidence base for the housing numbers was not objective as a different matrix could have been used. He did not wish to support the pushing through of an inadequate plan.

Councillor Knight said she had not intended to come to this meeting as she thought the decision was a fait accompli but had been asked to attend by her parish council. She thought that the plan showed disrespect to the public, the people represented should be allowed to voice their opinions.

She spoke about the importance of the southeast as the breadbasket of the country and questioned the logic of concentrating house building in this area. She asked whether the Council had lobbied the Government regarding the housing numbers. She had initially voted for the single settlement, but said there had been no subsequent discussions on where it should be located, though she thought it should probably be in the north of the district.

Councillor Eden understood the key issue was to build more houses but he had interpreted this as building new towns rather expanding existing settlements. He had put forward this argument, but it had reached a point where this argument had not been won. He was now content to move on with what had been agreed because it didn't work not having a plan. The best way to test the plan was to put it before the Inspector and let him judge whether it was sound.

Councillor Perry said he was concerned with openness, fairness and transparency. He could not support the plan because of the lack of provision for education, environment and highway mitigation. It conflicted with the NPPF sustainability test and was contrary to local plan ideals.

Councillor Watson thought the plan was neither sound nor sustainable. He pointed out that until today the Full Council had not discussed or approved the proposals in the plan, so how could councillors know whether or not it was sound? The consultations had been overwhelmingly against the proposals. This

public view had been demonstrated in the recent local elections in Saffron Walden and Newport.

He noted that the next stage was for the plan to be heard by the Inspector and he expected this to be a long process. He thought the dispersed option, with a hierarchy of main settlements and key villages succeeded only in causing harm to the most places and to the most people. The proposal to build to the east of Saffron Walden was not sustainable. He said the plan was a result of planning by stealth and the council had got it hopelessly wrong.

He referred to recent planning guidance by the DCLG that the local plan should be shaped by the local community. This was not the case with this plan. He would vote against the recommendations.

Councillor Dean said the Council should reject the Pre-Submission Local Plan as being unsound and a new plan should be prepared by summer 2014 for a number of reasons.

The Cabinet had not provided written justification in any documentation presented to Council that the current local plan was sound. It had received an overwhelming public rejection of the plan. It had failed to lead public opinion by the covert way in which it had prepared the plan and sought to impose it on most members of the Council and Uttlesford residents. The public in the affected communities across the district felt the council had provided no justification for ignoring their views. The public did not trust the local plan process to deliver growth proposals in the most sustainable locations for access and transport.

The plan had now reinstated the new settlement proposal at NE Elsenham as an expedient to address the shortfall in the Cabinet's housing forecasts which it belatedly announced in autumn 2013, without any transparent evaluation of alternative ways of accommodating the increased housing numbers. This chosen option suffered from poor road access; the previously claimed highway solution for southern traffic to use Hall Road, Elsenham and Takeley had now been dismissed by Essex Highways as inadequate.

He mentioned that there had been a last minute alternative proposal by Essex Highways for a northern bypass of Stansted Mountfitchet, which had not been in the papers for either the Local Plan Working Group or the Cabinet. This would aggravate congestion and encourage urbanisation in the area. The scheme had not been costed, so the deliverability of this element of the Pre-Submission Local Plan was in doubt and the plan was unsound.

Councillor Ketteridge said that throughout the preparation process the Council had met with Government Ministers on many occasions. No one could say the plan had been rushed through. It was clear that no community wanted the additional houses but there had been no answer as to where else they could go. There had been a considerable amount of misinformation about the housing numbers and sites.

He explained that a consultation was not a referendum. With the 2012 consultation 6.5% of the electorate, or 3.4% of the total population, had

responded. It was therefore not correct to say that 98% of the population had rejected the plan.

He said the District Council also had to be the voice for residents who were in desperate need of housing. The council did care about the district, which was why there were policies to protect conservation areas. However, all communities evolved over time and the council could not close its eyes to the ever-increasing population. The importance of having a local plan in place could not be overstated. It provided not just housing but also employment sites to provide for economic growth. The council had to find a balance to ensure continued prosperity for the district and make a decision for the whole district now and for the generations to follow.

Councillor Barker concluded that she understood the comments made and concerns about the proposals but said those opposing the local plan had never put forward a coherent alternative strategy.

The plan included many positive policies, including an increase in affordable and mixed housing tenure, including 5% bungalows to be provided in new developments. The plan would provide for the necessary infrastructure, including a new secondary school and primary schools and ensure that other infrastructure was in place in a timely manner.

She reported she had attended a recent planning conference where in response to concerns about the local plan process Nick Boles MP had replied, 'just build houses'. She doubted that the Inspector would accept a local plan with no development proposals for the main settlements. If the plan did not go forward it would be in the hands of the Inspector to overrule the council's decisions and grant applications on appeal. There would then be no guarantee that the necessary infrastructure would be provided.

The motion was then put to the vote and passed by 23 votes to 14.

RESOLVED

- 1 The Plan as proposed to be published under Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 Regulation 19 is sound; and
- 2 It is agreed that the document as proposed to be published is the document that it is intended the Council will submit under Regulation 22 to the Planning Inspectorate, subject to any further changes arising from the Regulation 19 consultation.

The voting was as follows:

For the motion

Councillors G Barker, S Barker, R Chambers, J Cheetham, P Davies, R Eastham, K Eden, M Felton, S Harris, E Hicks, S Howell, A Ketteridge, J Ketteridge, J Menell, E Oliver, V Ranger, J Redfern, H Rolfe, J Rose, J Salmon, L Smith, A Walters, L Wells.

Against the motion

J Davey, A Dean, I Evans, M Foley, E Godwin, D Jones, T Knight, M Lemon, K Mackman, D Morson, E Parr, J Parry, D Perry, D Watson.

C73 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2014 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Under minute C54 the Chairman reported that the Bridge End Garden Tour and lunch had been an enjoyable and well attended event. He thanked his PA and her colleagues for their help in organising the event.

C74 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded Members of his Civic Dinner to be held at Horham Hall, Thaxted on 9 May 2014.

C75 REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Leader mentioned the recent report that placed Uttlesford as the number one rural district in the country in terms of quality of life.

Councillor Walters had submitted a report on recent activities under his portfolio, which included community safety, emergency planning, licensing and Uttlesford policing.

C76 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

In relation to concerns at the impact of the Deregulation Bill, Councillor Perry said that he had received an acknowledgement from Sir Alan Haselhurst WP and was awaiting a formal reply.

Councillor Watson commented on Councillor Walter's report that had mentioned a large percentage increase in burglary from dwellings. This figure might be misleading and he asked if he could be advised of the actual numbers involved. Councillor Walters said he would send him this information.

Councillor Ranger asked why the vehicle activation sign (VAS) for Barnston that had been agreed by the Highway Panel in July 2012 had still not been received.

Councillor Walters explained that the Panel had been efficient in approving schemes within the allocated budget, which were then passed to the ECC portfolio holder for sign off. The delay came in the implementation phase when all the 12 district panels were putting in schemes. He understood that this issue

was being addressed but was disappointed that some of the simpler schemes had not been delivered earlier.

Councillor Rose commended the work of the emergency planning team during the recent flooding incidents in Newport. He asked that his thanks be passed on to the Emergency Planning Officer. One initiative that came out of this was the requirement for long lasting sand bags and whether they could be stored at the Newport depot. Councillor Walters said this was being investigated.

Councillor Rose then mentioned the recent adoption of the A Board Policy. He was concerned that this was based on ECC policy, as there were questions about its calculation of the necessary carriageway clearance. He asked for local businesses to be given a clear message about this aspect of the guidance.

Councillor Howell asked Councillor Barker about roadside littering. At present this was difficult to enforce, as when litter was thrown from a car it was necessary to identify the culprit. However he understood that there was new legislation, which would enable a civil penalty notice to be issued to the owner of the car.

Councillor Barker said she was aware of this provision, although the request would need to be made by an enforcement officer rather than by a member of the public. She reported an initiative, the 'Essex Cleaner' advertising campaign that would take place in June. A number of fast food outlets were involved and appropriate advertising sites were being confirmed. The campaign would also work with local parish councils to provide high viz jackets for litter picks. She said the litter hotspot in Uttlesford was particularly around the A120 near to Stansted Airport.

Councillor Foley asked whether vehicle number plate recording was planned for the district. Councillor Walters said that in a rural area this was one of the most effective ways to track transient crimes and it was currently being deployed on key strategic routes.

C77

MATTERS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

i) Call –in procedure

Councillor Lemon presented the recommendation of the Standards Committee which had reconsidered the proposed protocol after the decision to refer this item back at the last Council meeting. All councillors had been asked for further comments to aid the Standards Committee in its deliberation, but only 6 replies, 3 in support, 2 against had been received. The Standards Committee had discussed the issue in detail but still felt that the protocol was appropriate. Councillor Lemon moved that the Council agree acceptance of the protocol as originally submitted.

Councillors Dean asked why the Standards Committee had considered this matter when it was more of a procedural issue and asked whether members would be hauled before the committee if they did not adhere to the code. The Assistant Chief Executive – Legal explained that this matter had come to the

attention of the Standards Committee because of a complaint about an inappropriate call-in. The protocol was intended to provide clarity for members and to prevent them from inadvertently bringing the council into disrepute.

Councillor Lemon said the protocol was not a device to prevent call-in but to make sure it was appropriate. Councillor Cheetham said it was important that the call-in provided a sound planning reason, and although most members understood how to word this, it was suggested in the protocol that the members should contact the planning officer in the first instance to discuss the application.

Councillor Dean also mentioned the length of the call-in period, as during that time it might not be clear whether the planning officer had recommended the application for approval or refusal. He was advised that, as at present, a member could add a proviso that they would call-in the application only in the event of it being either refused or approved.

Councillor Rich was concerned that the protocol gave the Assistant Director Planning and Building Control the power to reject a call-in request if he was not satisfied with the reasons given. He objected to having to satisfy an officer of the council on reasons for making a call-in. Councillor Perry agreed that this provision was not proportionate.

The matter was put to the vote and it was

RESOLVED that the protocol on the call-in of planning applications be approved and adopted.

ii) Probity in planning

Councillor Lemon presented the recommendations from the Standards Committee to amend the Council's Probity in Planning protocol in respect of planning applications submitted by councillors and members of staff.

1. It was suggested that all recommendations for refusal for planning applications submitted by councillors and employees, both past and present, could if appropriate be dealt with under delegated powers.
2. It was suggested that after a period of 4 years all applications, (with a recommendation of approval or refusal) from ex-employees and ex-councillors should if appropriate be dealt with under delegated powers.

In relation to the first recommendation, Councillor Redfern was concerned that the member would be disadvantaged as there would not be an opportunity for the application to be called-in. She was advised that under the new protocol it was still possible for a councillor from another ward to do this.

Members felt that in respect of the second recommendation, a period of 2 years would be more appropriate.

RESOLVED that the Probity in Planning Protocol be amended as set out above with the amendment to the provision for ex councillors and employees to read ' for a period of 2 years'.

(iii) Gambling Policy

Councillor Perry presented the revised Gambling Policy, which was updated every three years and had been subject to consultation with all statutory bodies and town and parish councils.

RESOLVED that the amended Gambling Policy be approved.

C78 AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

This item had been automatically adjourned from the meeting on 27 February 2014.

RESOLVED that the Council Procedural rule 14.2 be amended to ensure that with regard to certain budgetary issues the decisions were formally recorded.

C79 AMENDMENT TO COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 2014/15

RESOLVED that the date for the North Forum meeting be changed from the 12th to 5th June 2014.

The meeting ended at 10.40pm.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS

Joanna Stone

Good evening, I'm Joanne Stone and I live in Saffron Walden

- Tonight, I hope to raise your awareness of air pollution
- Why?
 - Because air pollution causes 29,000 deaths in the UK every year ⁽¹⁾. That's one person every 20 minutes;
 - Because it kills more people than alcohol and obesity combined ⁽²⁾.
- Because you're 16 times more likely to die from it, than on the roads ⁽³⁾
- And because it affects children and the infirm, the most.
- That's why the EU want to fine us..
- **So why is this important to you, the members of UDC?**
- Because Saffron Walden has had several junctions above the legal limits of Nitrogen Dioxide, NO₂, since 2007 ⁽⁴⁾. And while NO₂ is a pollutant itself, very importantly, it's also a marker for others.
- The World Health Organisation is clear - where these levels of NO₂ exist, dangerous levels of other toxic pollutants, including Ultrafine Particles, Carbon Monoxide and ground level Ozone, will be present ⁽⁵⁾
- And Public Health England has told Uttlesford that there are **no** safe levels for Ultrafine particles?
- So for 7 years, UDC has had a responsibility, indeed an obligation, to reduce these levels of pollution.
- Five years ago, UDC's aim was to reduce them "as soon as possible" ⁽⁶⁾. Yet levels in Saffron Walden's AQMA have remained stubbornly above the limit ⁽⁶⁾
- The Action Plan simply hasn't worked □
- **That's the current situation – what about the future?**
- First, the challenge is about to become harder still. There are several large, approved developments in town still to be completed, so air pollution will worsen – the developers' own reports prove this ⁽⁷⁾.
- Secondly, the Plan you're considering tonight must raise pollution levels even further, because it increases traffic in the AQMA
- And traffic is the primary contributor to pollution in towns ⁽⁸⁾, according to both the Department of the Environment and Essex.
- The Air Quality Assessment commissioned for the Plan, confirms that the town will still be above legal limits in 2018. And it cannot reassure you about 2026, even with new, lower emission engines accounted for ⁽⁹⁾.
- The updated Highways Impact Assessment shows why. The junction capacity in town will be worse if this Plan is in place. Even with mitigation, five junctions will be above capacity in 2031 ⁽¹⁰⁾, where there was only one in 2012
- Mitigation just moves the new traffic, and its pollution, around the town, often too busy pedestrian schools routes.

Yet, despite this compelling evidence, Mr Harborough writes - “we believe that these (housing developments in Saffron Walden) are consistent with achieving air quality objectives”. In other words, he says you will be able to revoke the AQMA, while implementing this Plan. Something just doesn't add up.

Please consider carefully how Saffron Walden could live healthily, if these illegal levels of pollution continue for years to come? Because if you ratify this Plan, that is what you will be choosing

Dan Starr

Members of the council, thank you for your time tonight. I am Dan Starr, chair of WeAreResidents.org.

I am speaking to you on behalf of many, many residents of our district and tonight we ask you to reject the draft Local Plan before you. This plan is fatally flawed, seems designed to damage the largest number of communities, and has no support from voters and tax-payers. As a result trust in the council is at an all-time low. The process to produce is plan was flawed. It was prepared backwards. Instead of using the comparative sustainability analysis to guide locations, developers were asked to form a queue and sites seemingly chosen on a first-come, first-served basis. Then the required infrastructural analysis retrofitted to try and support what developers wanted – and it doesn't fit.

The resulting plan is both unsound and unsustainable, particularly with regard to its required NPPF obligations relating to traffic, highways, jobs, education and water, and it breaks legally required air quality levels. UDC can't point fingers at other authorities for this. UDC is required by law to take account of these issues.

Additionally the foundation on which the plan is built is incorrect. It uses an annual baseline figure of 523 new-homes, which is significantly proportionally higher than ANY neighbouring district. When there is no plan to produce jobs at a higher rate than either East Herts or a booming South Cambridgeshire, what is the justification to build an excess of new homes in the number 1 rural location in the country?

On top of this, the views of many of the town and parish councils, and the people in the wards that elected you, have been ignored and not properly considered. In fact the Cabinet system means that many of your voices are not equally represented. This plan is the least sustainable and worst of all the options that UDC proposed. It was rejected in 2012 and again 2013. The plan here tonight is to all intents and purposes the same plan, just with more houses. Here is a sobering thought: the 99% rejection by voters and tax payers was a higher margin than any members of this council were elected in on.

Because this plan is unsound, it will be contested in front of the Planning Inspectorate. That means will cost council tax payers more money to defend what you and residents already know is a dud.

As we approach the district elections in the next 12 months, we urge you to think about the wishes of those that elected you to represent them, reject this plan, and start to rebuild trust in our district council.

And as this is the most important decision facing the district in several generations, the residents of Uttlesford require complete, 100% transparency in the form of a recorded vote tonight

Ken McDonald

My name is Ken McDonald. I have been a resident of Stansted Mountfitchet for over 30 years. I am greatly saddened by the proposal before this council to significantly alter the special characteristics that make Uttlesford one of the best places to live. I wish to raise two questions in connection with the proposed local plan.

Firstly, could the Council please confirm that the overall housing target has not been set by central Government and that responsibility for setting the target rests with this Council?

Secondly, given the district's special character and given the apparent desire of its residents and indeed this Council to preserve that special character, will this Council now either

- refer back the housing target to the Council's officers with a request that they present the Council with alternative options, including an explanation of how nearby districts East Herts, South Cambs and Maldon arrived at their targets (not adopting the highest projection by Edge Analytics, as has Uttlesford) and in particular addressing my specific consultation submission that the target has been founded on an unrepresentative short-term base that was distorted by exceptional one-off population growth associated with airport-related housing,

or

- if you do not refer back, then explain why you have adopted this inflated housing target?.

Councillor Barker – answers

1. The housing numbers were subject to a previous consultation. The council believes that it is robust and meets in full the objectively assessed need. The final decision will rest with the developer.
2. The determination of the housing numbers was an independent study that considered existing population, birth rates and death rates. The Council's immediate neighbours are at different stages of the plan preparation. As a comparison South Cambs is planning for 19,000 new dwelling (950 houses a year) and East Herts for 15,000 new dwellings (750 houses a year). All councils have followed the same process which has been difficult and time consuming. The council would have preferred a lower level but it had to follow Government guidance. The plan must be robust as it will be tested by the Inspector.

Mr McDonald asked a subsequent question

'Why has Uttlesford chosen the highest growth numbers, when other nearby districts haven't done this?'

Barbara Hughes

My name is Barbara Hughes. My family have farmed in Uttlesford for three generations. I am a former Liberal Democrat member of Uttlesford District Council, representing Saffron Walden.

The issues I want to raise relate to infrastructure and consultation.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan has not been available for inspection. The documents it is based on are regarded as “evidence” and there has been no consultation with either Councillors or the general public.

For example:

- There is still no solution to traffic problems generated by the developments. Mitigation measures in the revised Highway Impact Assessment move existing problems from one junction to another, will cost at least a million pounds, and solve nothing. And there has been no consultation on the recent changes.
- There has been no consultation on additional school facilities. Primary school provision is included as a last-minute add-on, but with no consultation. There are no proposals regarding secondary schools, and hence no consultation.

Under “Infrastructure Delivery” for Saffron Walden, eight items are marked as “Critical” but will be resolved and paid for by individual developers. Lack of overview will lead to confusion and contradiction. And every Site Allocation Policy in Saffron Walden still requires a Transport Assessment, Air Quality Assessment, Approved Drainage Strategy and Flood Risk Assessment.

The District Council is abdicating its responsibility, and there is no overview of cumulative impacts. The necessary infrastructure should be properly planned, costed, and consulted on before the Local Plan is adopted.

The BNP-PARIBAS Sites Viability Assessment shows that the main housing site in Saffron Walden is only marginally viable. Additional infrastructure requirements will make it even less viable. The costs of the proposed link road and the possible compulsory purchase are not included. There is a real risk that the infrastructure needed, but not yet planned, consulted on, or costed, will be so expensive that Saffron Walden will not get the affordable housing that local people need, and the town will be left in a very much worse situation in every other respect.

We need to build houses, particularly affordable homes for the young people of this area. But to pick unsuitable sites just because they happen to be available is a crass misjudgement. Failure to provide evidence to support the housing allocations, and failure to consult with the local community, means the Plan risks being found unsound, and Saffron Walden risks uncontrolled development

Simon Lee

Simon Lee - Henham Parish Councillor speaking on behalf of the Joint Parish Council Steering Group and Save of Village campaign.

I last spoke in this Chamber in April 2008, some 6 years ago. You can imagine my disappointment that I sit here today challenging the same issue, a flawed local plan process forcing a single settlement on rural land adjacent to Elsenham.

There is a certain irony that Uttlesford was voted best rural place to live in the UK and a week later you are proposing to destroy prime agricultural land and two small villages. The local plan process has been flawed from the start with the creation of Option 4 by a small number of councillors. That plan was consulted on and later dropped in favour of a dispersed housing plan, a more credible option.

Andrew Taylor has now done an about turn returning to a single settlement to meet the housing numbers required. Those housing number have been challenged and are themselves unsound.

In 2010 the Government dropped its top down targets dictating Uttlesford provide 8000 homes over 20 years. Uttlesford response in 2012 was a plan based on providing 8300. Now in 2014 the plan is to provide 10,460 and increase of 26%. 2,500 more than the Government 2010 target that you apposed. Why? And why dump them in a single settlement.

May I remind you that this council refused permission twice for a development of only 800 homes on the same location that is proposed for 2100 in the new draft plan. Total madness

That development was turned down for sound planning reasons. These same reasons still exist. Nothing has changed.

We still do not understand why the Council is wedded to a single settlement at NE Elsenham and led by Fairfield. Our legal team made a freedom of information request to the council to explore this. It is worth noting that the council's response is still outstanding. Why?

I put to you this latest Local Plan is unsound and ill conceived, ignores the wishes of thousands of residents who views have been registered via numerous consultation over the years and is a bolt on to the existing draft plan.

This council is in disarray as it embarks on another local plan consultation that will offer the same responses, however this time Andrew Taylor has taken it upon himself to write the our Chairman telling him how the Save of Villages Group should respond to the consultation and that only one submission will suffice! Distressful, manipulative, unconstitutional and bias.

I urge this council to reject this latest draft of the Local Plan and starts again with evidence based plan from bottom up. I implore councillors to vote with their conscience and not with the Whip and represent the Residents of Uttlesford appropriately.

Please be reminded you will be judged in elections only a year away

Mr Hyatt

Mr Hyatt said that the Government's response to meeting the southeast housing need, to build more was houses, was very destructive on local communities. He suggested that the solution was to build a bypass. This would potentially run from a new junction on the M11 south of Newport skirting the south east boundary of Saffron Walden to Ashdon Road in the vicinity of Ridgeon. This would be a route of national importance

and as such would be beyond the resources of a local authority and would require the involvement of the Government and other agencies.

Ray Woodcock

I will start by referring to a report commissioned by Bishops Stortford town council:-

Total population in England increased from 49,138,831 in 2001 to 53,012,456 in 2011 by 7.3% between 2001 and 2011.

Population in Bishops Stortford increased from 35331 to 37838 by 6.6% in the same period.

Population in Stansted Mountfitchet increased from 9861 to 12765 by 22.7%.

The data is from the National Census 2001 and 2011. Stansted Mountfitchet has not yet been able to assimilate this massive increase

There has been one infrastructure improvement, what do I mean?

Our road system is unchanged. Our primary schools cannot cope, our health facilities do not have the resources compared with smaller villages in Uttlesford and our Highways are inadequate they were designed over 100 years ago; it is not possible to increase their capacity unless many dwellings are demolished. ECC data shows the B1383 carries over 16300 vehicles and the single track B1051, the notorious Grove Hill carries over 4800 vehicles, both during a 16 hours weekday. At times these roads are GRID LOCKED resulting in traffic delays and high pollution but this seems not to matter. All need to open your minds to the consequences of the new town of Helesenham, our roads cannot handle more traffic and dangerous air pollution will increase.

I don't like to use the term Climate Change, it seems to generate too much irrational comment but it is accepted that our climate is increasingly experiencing extremes of whether. What this will bring is already happening, major local flooding, some parts of the World are inhabitable, food cannot be grown in other parts, and people are starving. Oil is becoming more difficult to extract forcing up prices of all products including food; we desperately need to keep the arable land we now have to feed our population and become less dependent on imported food.

Please district councillors put aside your political point scoring, you must re-think this Local Plan for the long-term benefit of us and our children, this not a sustainable plan.

1. **District Character:** To preserve, conserve and enhance the locally distinctive and historic character of the market towns and rural settlements and their settings within Uttlesford and to retain the separation between settlements. To maintain and protect the Metropolitan Green Belt by only allowing building in the most exceptional circumstances.
2. **Protecting the Environment:** To protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment and varied landscape character within Uttlesford, reflecting the ecological and landscape sensitivity and promoting local distinctiveness and an understanding of the natural and historic significance of landscape feature and heritage assets.
3. **Function of the Market Towns:** To preserve and enhance the historic nature of the town centres of Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow and support their function as important retail and service centres providing a wide range of services and facilities within the District. New high quality and sustainable development will support these roles within the District.

4. **Housing Need:** To deliver housing for Uttlesford and to make sure that the housing being provided creates balanced communities by delivering sustainable, safe, attractive and healthy places to live while meeting local housing needs in terms of type and tenure including affordable housing and housing for people with specific accommodation needs.
5. **Employment Growth:** To promote a local economy which encourages growth of existing and new employers by providing suitable land and premises in sustainable locations to meet the anticipated needs and aspirations of businesses. To provide opportunities for employment growth related to the airport.
6. **Sustainable transport:** To reduce travel by car, promoting realistic alternatives and locating development so that journeys can be reduced and residents and employees can access public transport, cycle and footpath networks but recognising the continuing role that the car has in meeting transport and accessibility needs in this rural area.
7. **Infrastructure:** To make sure that new and/or enhanced infrastructure is provided in a timely way to allow people to access social, educational, health, employment, recreational, greenspace and cultural facilities within and outside the district. To make sure new open space, play, sport and recreational facilities are provided to meet the community's needs.