

COUNCIL MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 21 MARCH 2016 at 7.30pm

Present: Councillor S Harris – Chairman
Councillors, K Artus, G Barker, S Barker, R Chambers, J Davey, P Davies, P Fairhurst, T Farthing, M Felton, R Freeman, R Gleeson, T Goddard, J Gordon, E Hicks, S Howell, M Lemon, J Lodge, A Mills, S Morris, J Parry, J Redfern, H Rolfe, H Ryles and L Wells

Officers in attendance: D French (Chief Executive), R Fox (Planning Policy Team Leader), R Harborough (Director of Public Services), M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive – Legal and Monitoring Officer), P Snow (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and A Webb (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)

C76 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anjum, Asker, Dean, Hargreaves, Jones, Knight, Loughlin, Oliver, Parr, Ranger and Sell.

C77 NEW SETTLEMENT OPTION FOR THE LOCAL PLAN

In proposing the recommendation in the report, Councillor S Barker said that it was important for the Council to continue to consider all options in planning for the delivery of housing and employment including development in towns and villages across the district. A number of sites had been put forward for the potential development of a new settlement. A clear audit trail was needed to ensure all options and possible sites were considered.

Councillor Lodge drew attention to the reference in the report that some new settlement submissions had been based on garden city principles. He asked for further explanation of the nature of the proposals.

Councillor Barker said that members did not become involved in discussions with developers. She suggested the Planning Policy Team Leader should answer the question.

The Planning Policy Team Leader explained that it would not be appropriate to comment on specific proposals at this stage in the planning process. Several large scale developments had been proposed, some of which involved garden city principles and some of which did not. It was not possible to make judgements now about the merits of those proposals.

Councillor Lodge recalled the local plan Inspector's firm conclusion that a new settlement should be looked at carefully in preparing a new local plan. He would support the recommendation even though he considered the motion to be a nonsense.

Councillor R Freeman said he was in favour of new settlements. Garden cities were unique to England and had their origins in the donation of land by philanthropic benefactors. It was difficult to imagine similar land donations being made today so that aspect of garden city developments would be hard to replicate. It was the Inspector's clear view that there were limits to the growth of Saffron Walden and Dunmow. The Council should look instead to new settlements and a number of potential sites were ready made for that purpose, including the site at Great Chesterford.

The Chairman emphasised that the meeting was considering the principle of new settlements rather than looking at the merits of individual site locations.

The Leader then referred to his separate report updating members on the progress being made in preparing the Local Plan. This process would lead to a recommendation in June 2016 for the Council to decide the strategic direction of the plan. This would be a fully audited and transparent process. Officers would then explore a number of different options and would then put specific sites forward for consideration.

The process being followed allowed for public exhibitions followed by a period of consultation.

Following further consideration, the motion was put to the meeting and approved.

RESOLVED that a new settlement (or settlements) should continue to be investigated and analysed alongside all other possible options for housing and employment distribution and should not be dismissed at this stage from the potential options for inclusion in the Local Plan

The meeting ended at 7.45pm.