

**EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 16 NOVEMBER 2016 at 7.30pm**

Present: Councillor J Davey – Chairman
Councillors A Anjum, K Artus, H Asker, G Barker, S Barker, R Chambers, A Dean, P Fairhurst, T Farthing, M Felton, M Foley, R Freeman, T Goddard, J Gordon, N Hargreaves, E Hicks, S Howell, D Jones, B Light, J Lodge, J Loughlin, A Mills, S Morris, E Oliver, J Parry, V Ranger, J Redfern, H Rolfe, H Ryles and G Sell

Officers in attendance: D French (Chief Executive), R Harborough (Director of Public Services), S Pugh (Interim Head of Legal Services), P Snow (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and A Webb (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)

C33 MINUTE'S SILENCE IN TRIBUTE TO FORMER COUNCILLORS RON DEAN AND KEITH MACKMAN

The Chairman referred to the recent deaths of former councillors Keith Mackman and Ron Dean.

Keith Mackman had represented Great Dunmow South Ward from 2011 to 2015 initially as a Conservative and then as a founder member, and first leader, of the Residents for Uttlesford Group. Councillor Lodge then spoke about the contribution Keith Mackman had made to the Council, especially in the planning arena, and said he had been one of the most honest and public spirited councillors he had known.

Ron Dean had represented Saffron Walden Shire Ward from 1991 to 2003 and served as Chairman of the Council for the year from 1999 to 2000. Councillor Chambers spoke in tribute to Ron Dean who he said had been a quiet gentleman, persuasive and straight forward in manner, with an impressive period of war service. He then read a poem written by Mr Dean as part of a volume published during his period of office as Chairman.

All those present then stood in silent tribute to the memory of Ron Dean and Keith Mackman.

C34 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Chairman explained that because of the unusually high number of people registering to speak at this meeting he had decided to extend the time available to one hour and urged all those speaking to be as concise as possible.

Those listed below all made statements during the public speaking part of the meeting. In some cases questions were asked and, where applicable, answered by Councillor S Barker. All of the statements received and answers given are appended to these Minutes.

In order of speaking, those making statements were:

1. William Brown on behalf of Hinxtton Parish Council
2. Jackie Cheetham on behalf of Takeley Parish Council
3. Ken McDonald from Stansted
4. Richard Gilyead from Saffron Walden
5. Moyra Tourlamain on behalf of Neil Gregory, both of Great Chesterford Parish Council
6. Nick Buhaenko-Smith from Stebbing on behalf of SERCLE
7. Paul Stuart-Turner from Saffron Walden
8. Alexander Armstrong from Great Dunmow
9. Anthony Gerard from Newport
10. Chris Audritt on behalf of Little Easton Parish Council
11. Louise Luke from Great Chesterford
12. Mike Passfield on behalf of Elfreda Tealby-Watson, both of Great Chesterford
13. Richard Westbrook from Ashdon
14. Neil Green on behalf of Clive Hopewell, both from Great Chesterford
15. Michael Culkin on behalf of the Thaxted Society

C35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Freeman, Davies, Harris, Knight, Lemon and Wells.

Councillors Anjum, Asker, Fairhurst, R Freeman and Morris each declared their membership of Saffron Walden Town Council. Councillor Ranger declared an interest as a member of Barnston Parish Council. Councillor S Barker declared her interest as a member of Essex County Council. Councillor Redfern declared an interest as a member of Great Chesterford Parish Council. Councillor Parry declared her interest as a member of Newport Parish Council.

C36 SIMON PUGH INTERIM HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Simon Pugh as the Council's Interim Head of Legal Services.

C37 LOCAL PLAN

The Chairman explained how he intended to conduct the business of the extraordinary meeting called by eight councillors to consider reasons for delays in the Local Plan process, to question the Cabinet member concerned on a number of matters specified in the requisition, and to consider a tabled motion. The requisition from the eight members had divided consideration of the business into three distinct strands and he intended to keep these separate within the overall debate. An order of business paper had been circulated to members in advance. He urged members to show courtesy and to respect the rules of debate.

He invited Councillor Lodge to introduce the debate.

Councillor Lodge said that he was greatly encouraged that the public had turned out in such numbers. As a member of the Planning Policy Working Group he had set out on the path of producing an evidence based plan with ample opportunity to discuss options but it had not worked out that way. Evidence was still being awaited and there not been time or opportunity to consider how the plan might be implemented on the basis of the spatial strategies. Officers had worked tremendously hard to meet the deadline set by the Government although this was probably unrealistic.

There had been no significant time for the working group to discuss the plan and there was now confusion about the way ahead. There was neither a plan nor a plan to produce a plan and so the PPWG had not fulfilled its purpose. He and other councillors wanted to know what was going on and he called on Councillor Barker to provide answers.

Councillor S Barker acknowledged this was a complicated question and she thanked officers for the guidance they had provided. It had become clear at the recent member workshop that members had a number of questions and concerns that officers had not had time to address. This had been compounded by the need to report to Council on 8 November on work commissioned from Troy Navigus Planning about our readiness for examination. This could have been addressed in time for the Council meeting but not in time to present to the PPWG or Cabinet.

Routine conversations with Braintree identified potential areas for concern that would benefit from further joint work.

So the area of major concern had been the timetable. The Council had adopted the LDS in December 2015 against the threat of intervention by the DCLG where a plan had not been published by March 2017, or early in 2017 as DCLG had subsequently clarified. The timetable was tight but considered achievable but had not taken account of other factors concerned with the day to day working of the programme. It was the Chief Executive's judgement that a pause was preferable to continuing regardless. Subsequent events had supported the decision to pause the process.

Officers had arranged for a principal planning inspector to review the evidence during the first week in November to assess the potential soundness of the emerging proposals. At the same time a conference had been arranged with the Council's barrister. Those meetings resulted in some technical challenges to the adequacy of the proposed scale of housing provision both within Uttlesford and the West Essex/East Herts strategic housing market area as a whole. There was also a challenge to the proposed distribution within the HMA with its focus on the growth of Harlow and on strategic sites within Uttlesford. The meetings also discussed the outcome of the inter authority strategies. It was clear there would be benefit in giving all of those matters further consideration.

Councillor Barker went on to tell the meeting about the consequences of the pause in terms of potential intervention by DCLG, the impact on New Homes Bonus, and the need to adopt a revised LDS. She said that a revised LDS would enable the PINS to schedule an examination with confidence. If the Government

decided not to make NHB allocations to authorities unable to submit a plan, this could have an impact in the region of £300k, although the allocation for 2017/18 was not yet confirmed. In terms of possible intervention, the test would be whether the process could be moved on more quickly than would otherwise happen and she expressed confidence that was not the case. In her view the pause was enabling the plan to move forward with greater assurance.

The Council did not presently have a preferred strategy other than the Full Council resolution to meet housing needs through a combination of new settlement(s), towns and villages. The pause was put in place to enable further consideration of what the preferred strategy should be after considering the distribution strategies and new settlement options and taking account of the sustainability, environmental and transport assessments. The pause would also enable the evidence gathered to be reviewed to ensure it remained relevant.

Duty to cooperate discussions had continued with South Cambridgeshire District Council focussing on the need for a clear and sequential process to identify growth choices. Proposals of cross-border interest would continue to be discussed including the Wellcome Trust's proposals for Hinxton Hall. If Uttlesford were to choose a significant growth site around Great Chesterford, SCDC would seek to test the evidence to demonstrate soundness, bearing in mind problems with transport infrastructure.

Similar duty to cooperate discussions with Braintree had focussed on its draft local plan preferred options including the West of Braintree new settlement location and its potential to be a cross boundary allocation. Officers had agreed to further joint work including strategic transport assessment modelling to establish the scope for increasing the supply of new homes from the West of Braintree site. In the event of a cross border site proceeding, both councils would need to commit to a joint area action plan and a common strategic policy approach. Uttlesford had agreed to cooperate in a concept framework being developed by consultants.

In summary, Councillor Barker said that a new LDS would be underpinned by a detailed project plan but this would need to be preceded by timescales for the additional evidence, a duty to cooperate review to align plans with adjoining districts, the outcome of the NHB consultation, and further member input. All of this was intended to put in place a timely and sound plan for the district.

At this point, a paper was tabled setting out the terms of reference for the Planning Advisory Service's review of the Local Plan process.

Councillor Lodge said that the original intention was to agree the plan for consultation at a meeting of the Council scheduled for last week. He asked how that would have been possible in the absence of a highways strategy.

In response to Councillor Barker's comment that there was a draft highways strategy in place, Councillor Lodge remarked on the lack of a highways strategy for Saffron Walden. Councillor Barker agreed that she had not seen a detailed highways strategy for Saffron Walden but that a draft highways strategy was

nevertheless available. She said that we were where we were and the pause would enable further work to be done as she had already explained.

In response to a question from Councillor Parry, she confirmed that the consultation process would happen as originally agreed once the plan was in place. There was then an exchange about the number of consultations to be carried out. Councillor Barker confirmed that it was agreed there would be two consultations during the present process not three as had happened previously. She said the Council would consult on the draft plan and would decide on the basis of the comments made whether to modify the plan before it was sent for examination.

Councillor Foley asked the following questions:

- If there is no separate study, would Uttlesford commission its own study on the impact of development on the character and transport of Great Dunmow?
- Will the transport assessment indicate the cost of works needed for junction 8 of the M11 given the existing problems impacting on the A120?

He expressed the concern and anger of the southern parishes at the way the press had been briefed and said it had given the impression a study of options for the development of a new settlement based on garden city principles would not extend beyond the south of the district. Above all there was a wish for fairness in the process.

In answer to the first question, Councillor Barker congratulated Great Dunmow Town Council on being the first parish to have a neighbourhood plan in place. She agreed that the development of a new town to the west of Dunmow would have an impact on the town but might enhance the High Street by providing more local businesses. There were already 2,800 new homes allocated for Dunmow regardless of the new town option.

She agreed the press briefing had been unfortunate especially since the Chief Executive had decided to pause the process shortly afterwards. However, the press had in some cases not respected the embargo even after they had been contacted and asked not to publish.

Councillor Rolfe then referred to the helpful contributions made by members of the public at this meeting which had demonstrated the challenge for the plan. He said there had been speakers from most parts of Uttlesford. In general, everyone speaking had been saying the same thing, that they did not want development in their area. The Council had to produce a plan and knew what the numbers were. The plan had been paused so that the evidence could be respected by everyone even if there were disagreements about where development should be located.

He acknowledged that junction 8 was under severe pressure. A scoping study had been financed with money from the Greater Cambridge and Peterborough LEP and from Essex County Council, and was high on the Government's agenda

in terms of improvement. There was also a study of potential improvements from Galleys Corner on the A120 through to the A12. In summary, the need for improvements at junction 8 was well recognised and had been the subject of much lobbying over many years.

Councillor Dean said that the question of air pollution in Saffron Walden must be addressed and asked for assurances that more information about new settlements would be made available for members as he would not have felt able to make a decision on the basis of the evidence produced to date. He said that one of the reasons advanced for not placing a new settlement at Great Chesterford had been that not all trains stopped there but the same considerations applied at Elsenham and the question had not been raised in the past.

Finally, Councillor Dean asked that a review be carried out of the way the PPWG operated.

Councillor Rolfe said there were three key areas to be considered. These were the two new settlements being considered in the south of Uttlesford, second the why not Chesterford question, and finally the concerns about development in Saffron Walden. The purpose of the pause was precisely to enable all three questions to be considered in detail.

He wanted to be crystal clear that either all or some of the sites being considered would take housing to accommodate the 4,600 homes needing to be allocated. Like Councillor Dean he was concerned to make sure that decisions would be taken only when the evidence was available. That principle underpinned the whole process.

An alternative site in Saffron Walden was possible but more progress could not be made until the highways study was ready at which time it would be considered in conjunction with the Town Council. The highways study in turn would impact on the air quality study and that would also be considered with the Town Council.

Of the 900 people unable to find a home in Uttlesford more than 250 were in Saffron Walden. The Council had a moral duty to look after them.

Councillor R Freeman said he chaired the planning committee on the Town Council. In referring to the recent workshop he said that members had been advised that, of the nearly 10,000 jobs expected to be created in Uttlesford, 9,000 were ascribed to Stansted Airport. That had been used to justify development along the A120 but ignored the two largest employment centres for Uttlesford of London and Cambridge and yet this error had not been corrected.

Councillor Rolfe confirmed that Councillor Freeman was right to say that Stansted Airport was the district's largest employer but less than 20% of the airport workforce lived in Uttlesford. It was correct to say that a large proportion of Uttlesford's residents commuted out of the district. It was encouraging that unemployment in Uttlesford was one of the lowest in the country at 0.7%. He welcomed news of extra jobs creation at the airport associated with Jet2 and

said the Council would be asked to decide soon on MAG's proposed expansion of airport capacity at Stansted from 35 to 43 million passengers per annum. There were other encouraging initiatives including the provision of a new tertiary college for the study of engineering skills and a proposal for a new business park on the north side of the airport on the site of the old terminal. He wanted to provide opportunities for local business with the capacity to grow.

Councillor Fairhurst said he had seen the press reports that the plan was ready to be published. He wanted to know why officers had jumped the gun by speaking to the press and asked whether that was an attempt to prejudice the plan by coercing members.

In response the Chief Executive said that it was normal practice to brief the press on key aspects of policy in common with other organisations. When she had spoken to the press there was no reason to suppose the PPWG papers would not be published for the following meeting and it only became apparent after the Monday when the briefing was given that a decision needed to be made to pause the process.

Councillor Morris said that the 4,600 homes already given permission but not built appeared to have been ignored in the allocation of a similar number of new homes in the draft spatial strategy. For example, a further 2,800 new homes were to be allocated in Great Dunmow and a further 600 in Saffron Walden. She asked how that could be seen in the evidence base.

Councillor Barker responded that every site was indicated on the information included on the website. The Council could plan only for what would be built within the period of the plan.

Councillor Asker asked about the selection of transport scenarios. She understood that 12 potential scenarios in the draft transport study had been provided to the consultants but of those four had been dismissed because they assumed more homes than proposed and four as unrealistic because they assumed no development in the towns and villages. The consultants had been asked to study only four and these were all based on the assumption that at least 700 homes would be built in Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden. She asked who had decided on the instructions to be given, why had the PPWG not been involved in that process, and why were no other scenarios considered that would not involve building at least that number of homes?

The Director of Public Services confirmed that all the scenarios had been provided to the transport consultants. Part of the work being carried out during the pause was to look at the variations on those scenarios so that members would know what the impacts of each of them would be.

Councillor Hargreaves referred to the first workshop where members had been presented with a range of options and had discussed these in a thoughtful and business-like manner. A straw poll indicated that the majority of members supported development of two sites but at the following workshop the views of members had been ignored. He asked for an assurance that members views would be listened to at any future workshop sessions.

Councillor Rolfe said the purpose of the workshop had been to enable free private discussion of the available options and the straw poll mentioned had not been based on a range of substantive evidence. He had been staggered to discover that figures had been released to the public by Councillor Hargreaves' group and he considered this to be a total breach of confidentiality.

In welcoming public attendance, Councillor Light said that it had been the first opportunity for feedback from residents across Uttlesford. She wished to echo many of the points raised and question the methodology used as this was flawed. She had no confidence that the evidence presented was sufficient to make an informed decision and it appeared that the evidence had been made to fit the decision not the other way around.

Councillor Rolfe asked Councillor Light whether she had read all of the evidence and said it was clear she had not read enough.

In response Councillor Light questioned the process followed at the public exhibitions as there was no paperwork or anything to suggest public feedback was being recorded.

Councillor Rolfe responded that he had attended all of the public exhibitions, together with officers, and confirmed that all public comments were listened to most carefully. He had afterwards received very many emails from members of the public. The Council was obliged to hold a Regulation 19 consultation once all of the available evidence had been obtained and considered.

Councillor Redfern said she felt incensed to be told the public had not had a chance to have their say and this was an unfair comment. The role of the PPWG was to feed information to the Council and this was being done. She totally understood why members felt the need to ask for more evidence but it was simply incorrect to say that evidence was being altered to suit a particular conclusion.

Councillor Chambers said that all meetings of the PPWG were open to the public and many had attended as well as other councillors. There had been many briefings from officers and pages of evidence provided to be considered. The need was to get to the point where a decision could be taken and it was the job of councillors to do that without losing control of the process.

Councillor Loughlin said she had walked out of the predecessor to the PPWG as it was not open but that was not the case now. If it was the case she would walk out again. Members should be telling their parishes to come along to the meetings and have their say.

The Chairman concluded part 1 of the discussion and announced he would now move to part 2. This was to enable councillors to identify any omissions, deviations or departures from acceptable practices in the planning process they considered to have been made in the Local Plan and to make proposals for any corrective measures to be considered in the following part of the debate.

He invited Councillor Lodge to speak. He said that the PPWG had spent zero minutes talking about where any new settlements should be located and he consequently felt the working group was not doing its job. There had been a failure to allow enough time or space for discussion.

Councillor Barker said that some sites were commercially sensitive and for that reason could not be discussed in a public meeting. When the time was right they would come forward for discussion by the PPWG.

Councillor Asker asked for confirmation that meetings of the PPWG were public and the public had entitlement to see all papers.

Councillor Rolfe confirmed that all meetings of the PPWG were public. He did not disagree with Councillor Lodge that the working group should be looking at the detail. There was now a degree of consensus that meetings should fall into two parts consisting of an open part and a closed part. This was not intended to exclude the public but to avoid damage from commercial speculators.

Councillor Asker asked for clarification about the status of papers prepared for the cancelled PPWG meeting. In response, Councillor Barker said that papers were prepared for that meeting but it had not taken place because of the pause now introduced and so those papers were not now available and would not be published.

The Chairman announced the closure of part 2 of the debate and said he would now invite Councillor Lodge to propose the motion on the agenda, subject to any alterations he wished to make.

Councillor Lodge proposed the following motion as submitted by Councillors Asker, Fairhurst, R Freeman, Hargreaves, Light, Lodge, Morris and Parry:

To consider, debate and vote upon the following MOTION, of which due notice has been given:

“That Cabinet put in place immediate corrective measures to instil transparency and public confidence into the emerging Local Plan. These measures to include:

- Reviewing and making public the criteria and the weightings used to select sites for possible new settlements or large housing developments and to decide between different alternative spatial strategies. This review to take particular account of the need for many residents to travel outside of Uttlesford for their employment, and their consequent need to access the M11 motorway and the national rail network*
- Ensuring that all material matters relating to the Local Plan, including any instruction of any expert or other third party assistance or the commissioning of any material evidence or other work stream in connection with the Local Plan, or the consideration of any spatial strategy of any material component of it, are referred to the Planning Policy Working Group for consideration.*

- *Reviewing the projected growth plans for Uttlesford, taking a realistic estimate of the expected growth of Stansted Airport (including the potential impact on the UK economy of Brexit) and the fact that many residents travel outside the district for work, for example to London, and to the expanding high-technology industries around Cambridge and along the M11/All corridor.”*

Councillor R Freeman seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak later in the debate.

Councillor Rolfe proposed the following amendment:

“The Council has confidence in officers to present in a comprehensive and timely manner all necessary information and reports to the Planning Policy Working Group, Cabinet and Council to enable the development of proposals for a new local plan that will be found sound at examination.”

He said he supported some of the spirit behind the original motion but it needed simplification and the need to express confidence in the talented team of officers, in the consultants and in all others involved to produce a sound Local Plan. He urged all members to support the principle that the Council would have to make a decision.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Howell.

On a point of order, Councillor Lodge asked for a ruling on the effect of Procedure Rule 12.6 (iv) as to whether the amendment negated the motion.

The Interim Head of Legal Services advised the meeting that, in his view, it did not do so because it met the test that the same effect could not be achieved by voting against the motion. The amendment set out an alternative course of action and so did not negate the motion.

Councillor Howell spoke in support of the amendment. In welcoming those members of the public present he said he had wrestled with this matter for the whole of his ten years as a councillor and considered it to be an insurmountable challenge. He urged all members of the community to come together to strive to agree a Local Plan in the interests of everyone as a failure of that endeavour would mean that responsibility would be transferred to central government and control taken away at a local level.

In making that decision members must rely on the facts and the evidence alone. The plan would be tested by the inspector and, if found unsound we would again go through the embarrassment of what happened in December 2014 when the plan was rejected.

The Inspector’s conclusions in effect gave us the answer in identifying two areas in which the plan had failed. His report had said that an uplift of at least 10% would be a reasonable and proportionate increase, say to about 580 houses per annum. He then said he endorsed comments made by local ward councillors at

the time about the unsuitability of the site at Elsenham including challenges around the transport links.

We should now learn those lessons and reach conclusions based on the evidence presented.

Councillor Howell also spoke about the growth in passenger numbers at Stansted Airport and said it was essential to take the impact that might have into account.

In response to an intervention from Councillor Light, he said that if a site at Great Chesterford were to be put forward without sound evidence it would fail in just the same way the previous plan had failed in respect of the Elsenham site. He confirmed he was happy to second the amendment.

Councillor Fairhurst said this brought back the whole purpose of the meeting taking place. The motion he supported asked for immediate corrective measures to be put in place to instil transparency and public confidence into the emerging Local Plan and he considered there was no such confidence, honesty or transparency at the moment.

Councillor Dean thanked the Residents for Uttlesford members for calling the meeting as it had been useful to hear from the public. In thanking Councillor Barker for her statement he said the danger in the motion was that it contained too many technical points. He asked Councillor Rolfe to accept the insertion of the words “supports the present pause and” so that it would now read:

*“The Council **supports the present pause and** has confidence in officers to present in a comprehensive and timely manner all necessary information and reports to the Planning Policy Working Group, Cabinet and Council to enable the development of proposals for a new local plan that will be found sound at examination.”*

Councillor Rolfe accepted inclusion of the additional words in his amendment to be put to the vote.

Councillor Asker said there was never any suggestion that her group did not have confidence in officers. The issue was the timescale of what was needed to get the process on track. The wording “in a timely manner” in the amendment was not specific enough as there was no time scale indicated.

Councillor R Freeman agreed and refuted any suggestion that the motion called into question members’ confidence or otherwise in officers. The main problem was the nature of the evidence that was being presented and the weighting that was given to that evidence.

Councillor Artus expressed annoyance with the political nature of the debate as he could otherwise have voted for much of the original motion. However, it was worth coming to listen to the views of the public.

Councillor Ranger called for the question now to be put.

A vote then took place on the amendment and this was carried by 21 votes to one against.

Councillor Lodge then replied to the debate as the mover of the original motion. He said he accepted the legal officer's opinion but the acceptance of the amendment had made a farce of the meeting.

Members then voted on the substantive motion and this was carried with no votes against.

RESOLVED that the Council supports the present pause and has confidence in officers to present in a comprehensive and timely manner all necessary information and reports to the Planning Policy Working Group, Cabinet and Council to enable the development of proposals for a new local plan that will be found sound at examination.

The meeting ended at 10.10pm.

APPENDIX – PUBLIC SPEAKING STATEMENTS

1. William Brown on behalf of Hinxtton Parish Council to make a statement and ask the following questions:

My questions relate to the possibility that Uttlesford DC might plan to develop a housing settlement on land north of Great Chesterford on the boundary with South Cambridgeshire (sites 08GtChe15 and 10GtChe15).

The background is that such a development would have severe implications for the S Cambs villages of Hinxtton, Ickleton, Duxford and Whittlesford immediately down the River Cam.

According to the assessments on UDC's website, there is 'currently no capacity in the sewerage network for additional dwellings' and it would require a new connection that would be required to cross the M11/A11 to the Ickleton sewage works which would be likely to '... require extensive upgrades to accommodate the flows ...'. The assessment considers that 'A new settlement would increase the discharge of treated effluent to the River Cam thus warranting more stringent consent standards' (Source: UDC Water Cycle Study, 2010).

It is reported that: 'Development in this locality has the potential to increase the level of flood risk from the River Cam downstream by increasing water run-off' (Source: Uttlesford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2008). The aforementioned villages immediately downstream are all already highly vulnerable to flooding.

The UDC website's assessment of the 'Landscape Character of the Uttlesford District' says of the River Cam valley, where the proposed settlement would be on high ground: 'The open skyline of the valley slopes is visually sensitive, with new development potentially being highly visible within panoramic inter and cross-valley views' (7.2.1). Such visibility would be particularly high for these S Cambs villages.

Given comparative employment opportunities and housing costs, a high proportion of householders in the proposed settlement would commute to work in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. There is no option to access the northbound M11 from Great Chesterford other than Junction 10 with the A505. Access to Junction 10 is via the A1301 to the A505 past Hinxtton, or by local roads to the A505 through Ickleton and Duxford. The increased population in Great Chesterford would substantially increase the pressure of traffic on these access roads, which already suffer severe congestion.

My questions are:

Question (1): 'Given this background, how would Uttlesford DC propose to bear the costs and mitigate the damage that would be caused by the proposed Great Chesterford settlement to the villages of S Cambs immediately over the district boundary?'

Answer: The costs of infrastructure to address the impacts that would be caused by the development would need to be capable of being met. In the case of a strategic site these would either have to be met by a delivery vehicle, or through planning

obligations. A viability assessment would be carried out to check the deliverability of any proposals.

Question (2): 'What evidence does the Uttlesford DC have that such a settlement would not primarily meet the housing needs of South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge, rather than those of Uttlesford District?'

Answer: The location is well situated in relation to Cambridge and the south Cambridge Science Cluster. However, South Cambridgeshire has not asked UDC to help meet its objectively assessed housing need as it, and Cambridge City Council, have their own proposals to meet their needs. A local plan allocation for a new settlement at Great Chesterford would count towards Uttlesford's objectively assessed housing needs but it would need to form part of a portfolio of sites that collectively represented the most appropriate of all the reasonable alternatives.

2. Jackie Cheetham on behalf of Takeley Parish Council to make a statement and ask the following question:

'The headlines from the proposed new Local Plan indicate that yet again housing development is focused in the south of the district; including two 'new settlements'. We are being told that development in the north of the district is constrained by the influence of South Cambs. What does this mean? The evolving S Cambs Local Plan (the Examination is in progress) shows no major development proposals near the boundary with Uttlesford. There is no published objection from S Cambs about development constraints in the north of Uttlesford, nor could any be justified. In addition, given the all too well known problems at jtn 8 of the M11 in the south and the available capacity at jtn 9, will the Council please explain what evidence is available to demonstrate that the proposed allocations in the south of the district are sustainable, and why the north of the district is not?'

Takeley is still absorbing the substantial development allocated in the 2005 Local Plan: Takeley/Lt Canfield provided almost 20% its total. Now, in this new plan it, it appears that further development is to be allocated to Takeley - possibly up to 500 extra homes or more than 10% of extra new housing. How can this be justified when Takeley is well down the settlement hierarchy with few local services, education, employment etc. and poor transportation links?'

Answer: No decision has been made about the appropriate distribution of housing. SCDC has expressed potential concerns about the impact on a new settlement at Great Chesterford and has challenged UDC to assemble evidence of these impacts and how they might be mitigated if it were minded to propose such a development. The respective impacts on the strategic road network and in particular junction capacity are material to the choice of the most appropriate of the reasonable alternatives, but additional scenarios are still being modelled and assessed. Takeley is a key village in the A120 corridor close to Stansted Airport and therefore in an important strategic location. Land to the north of the village though contributes to the objectives of the Countryside Protection Zone which have previously been supported.

3. Ken McDonald from Stansted Mountfitchet to make the following statement:

Good evening. My name is Ken McDonald. I have lived in Uttlesford for 35 years. I have no loyalty or leaning to any political party. I only wish to see Uttlesford develop a sound plan that passes inspection and does not destroy the character of our district. My comments relate to the Plan as a whole.

I hope you are aware that Uttlesford's Local Plan is founded on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment – the SHMA.

For more than a year I have been trying to draw attention to a number of significant deficiencies in the SHMA and also arguing that it has led to Uttlesford planning to build far more houses than it needs – perhaps four thousand too many.

The current draft plan seeks an increase in housing stock of 38% - more than a third - over just 22 years – far more than almost everywhere else in the country.

I have been unable to follow how key conclusions in the SHMA have been arrived at, most notably the number of houses needed in Uttlesford. I am a chartered accountant, familiar with analysing figures. Now, if I can't follow the calculations, I suspect most reasonable people (including planning inspectors) will also not be able to.

The SHMA's lack of audit trail, as it is called, echoes a fundamental reason for the failure of the 2014 plan– I'm sure none of us want to see another failure.

Sadly, the Council has failed to answer my criticisms of the SHMA, responding instead with reference to figures emanating from the failed 2014 Plan. In 2014 the same fundamental forecasting mistake was made - basing future need on an atypical base period – the period of exceptional “airport-related” house-building.

The Council's blind faith in the 2014 forecasts and failure to critically appraise the evidence that is being offered in support of this plan is a recipe for either another failed plan or, even worse, a thorough trashing of Uttlesford.

I was given hope by the recent announcement that independent consultants have been asked to review progress – something I have been seeking for many months.

I hope these new consultants will be asked to consider the weaknesses that have been identified in the SHMA which is the basis - the unsound basis for the new Plan.

Also, I hope the consultants will consider the case for a lower house-building target, based on longer-term trends and not just the exceptional period of airport-related housebuilding.

I hope they will be asked if a lower target, based on longer-term trends, might stand a reasonable chance of acceptance at the examination in public.

I have been told that the new consultants have not be asked to review the SHMA, but I hope you will ensure they do.

4. Richard Gilyead from Saffron Walden to make the following statement:

Mr Chairman, Members of the Council. The Local Plan is supposed to be a plan for the future well-being and prosperity of our district. It should cover employment, transport, housing and the environment we all depend on. Air quality is a key factor in planning for a healthy future.

As recently as September, a cross-party group of MPs called the national air pollution problem a “public health emergency”. At the beginning of this month, the government’s plan for tackling the UK’s air pollution crisis was judged as illegally poor in the high court. It is clear that not enough is being done.

And yet, here we are again with a plan to build hundreds of new houses on the wrong side of Saffron Walden, with no workable proposals to deal with all the traffic, even though pollution levels are already rising again.

The latest available Highways Assessment from 2014 predicted an average increase of 350% in peak queues at key junctions even with all the proposed mitigation measures in place and that’s before all the extra houses now included in the plan.

The Council’s own Air Quality Action Plan 2016 says, “... the growth of Saffron Walden and surrounding areas will lead to increased traffic using local roads, and improvements in emission quality of new vehicles may be insufficient to mitigate against increases in the levels of harmful pollutants emitted by the overall traffic fleet.”

In other words, there is no real plan to tackle the traffic queues or the air quality problems which will worsen as a result of this unsustainable development plan. Nobody knows when, or even if, the Air Quality Management Area designation will ever be lifted from our town.

The Council should be meeting its legal obligation to consider the cumulative effect of development on air quality. But it also has an ethical responsibility to protect the health and well-being of all residents. Will UDC now take their responsibility seriously and commit to control development so that pollution levels are brought within legal limits both now and for the foreseeable future?

5. Moyra Tourlamain on behalf of Neil Gregory both of Great Chesterford Parish Council

Chairman

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this meeting.

I am Moyra Tourlamain, and I am speaking at the request, and on behalf of Great Chesterford Parish Council.

We have studied the requisition for this extraordinary council meeting and the notice of motion. Accordingly, we have the following observations. We welcome the focus of this meeting in seeking clarity as to process and as to the timetable of the local plan.

We further welcome the request for specification of the potential spatial strategies and the evidence base that illuminates those spatial strategies. In particular the state of the evidence base when the local plan was paused last month.

We welcome clarity as to the discussions and interactions with neighbouring authorities, notably South Cambridgeshire, in fulfillment of the duty to cooperate.

We note that members of this council received briefings on the proposed strategy on 11 October and 17 October. We note that the press were also briefed. Sadly, this same courtesy has not been extended to residents or to parish and town councils. Indeed our request for sight of the evidence base and the briefings made to members of this council and the press has been refused by officers, who *inter alia*, have asserted the need for what they term a “safe space” to develop the plan.

We regard it as essential to have a robust understanding of the evidence base at the date the plan was paused. Our concern, which we must make clear, is that the motion before you is explicit – it seeks to substitute revised assumptions, presumptions and starting points in order to influence the outcome of the process. We question the relevance of a number of points in the draft motion before you and suggest it may be an abuse of process with the intention of influencing what must be an objective and evidence led plan.

Thus; The purpose of the local plan is to meet the housing needs and employment land needs of the district. That and that alone. It is not to assist with the housing needs of the Cambridge region or to aid or augment the Cambridge phenomenon. That is a matter for South Cambs, Cambridge City and national government.

We are informed that South Cambs would not welcome a major development on their southern boundary, and, by definition our northern boundary. We understand that the A1301/a505 junction is frequently gridlocked as is junction 10 of the m11. Extra traffic is unsustainable as Cambridgeshire County Council have made clear. Even if development on our northern boundary were welcomed by our neighbours, the transport infrastructure does not exist to support it. We feel it incumbent upon us to remind members of this Council that unless neighbouring authorities request our assistance then the local plan must restrict itself to our district.

The motion before you is fatally flawed and to pass it would we suggest increase delay, add to cost and make the local plan more susceptible to challenge at the public examination.

Thank you

6. Nick Buhaenko-Smith from Stebbing to make a statement

My name is Nick Buhaenko-Smith and as some councillors already know I represent SERCLE, the residents group opposed to the West of Braintree new settlement proposal.

Whilst I could list many valid reasons why the West of Braintree is not a sustainable location, I would like to take this opportunity to draw the councils attention to what we believe are key points, related to the wider region, that

would contribute to the success of Uttlesford's Local plan and future prosperity.

SERCLE is pleased that UDC's strategy for a Local Plan has been paused to review evidence, especially after the press releases about the decision having been made to locate both new settlements in the south of the District.

It is within this review period we believe the questions that councillors should be asking is where does Uttlesford want to be by 2033 and beyond? And how could the long-term strategy of the region's economic growth and UDC's housing distribution strategy help achieve this goal?

The obvious economic growth areas where Uttlesford could play a major role are first, the Government backed strategy for the growth along the M11 corridor supported by the LSCC and Cambridge / Peterborough LEP (in which Uttlesford are key partners) and secondly, the growth of employment opportunities in the global biotech and biomedical industries called the "Southern Cluster" in the north of Uttlesford and South Cambridgeshire. A growth we also add that is also supported by a sustainable transport strategy and that help accommodate this growth.

This can be compared to the economic growth along the A120 being promoted by Haven Gateway who state on their own website:

"The SME sector (businesses employing less than 250 staff) form the vast majority of businesses in the Haven Gateway area."

Along with economic growth, one of the key tenets of a housing distribution strategy is deliverability. Always a major concern for councils. In the recently withdrawn new settlement strategy, the council would have expected it's housing numbers to be fulfilled by the concentration of the all major development within a 7-mile corridor of the A120. The potential outcome - the council create a scenario in that developers are faced with building and then trying to sell houses in that concentrated corridor.

This concentration would also compound the M11 / Junction 8 issue, already a cause for concern not only by residents but by a major UDC employer, as was expressed in their responses to the consultation issued by Braintree DC on its local plan proposals. The M11 / Junction 8 contributing to the failure of the last Local Plan.

We all appreciate this question of deliverability is crucial as it could impact Uttlesford's duty to continuously deliver a 5-year housing supply into the future.

If this is not achieved, because of lack of housing being built or lack of suitable local employment opportunities to attract people to the area, then it could open the door to planning appeals that may prove difficult to defend. As time is limited, I have only touched upon a two of the many risks that SERCLE have identified in UDC's local plan process, overall distribution strategy and evidence.

Local residents and SERCLE hope you will take the longer term strategic picture

into account, when reaching your decision on the Uttlesford Local Plan.
Thank you for listening.

7. Paul Stuart-Turner from Saffron Walden to ask the following question:

Has it been made clear to national government that Saffron Walden is an exceptional case because the Audley End Estate blocks development to the West of the town and the key transport links and secondary school are on this side of town. Any development on the east of the town therefore creates severe congestion especially in the morning and evening rush hours?

I am not aware of many towns in Britain that face this unusual difficulty.

Answer: Local planning authorities are charged with preparing local plans and determining how best to deliver growth in their areas drawing on their local knowledge of their communities and fulfilling their place shaping role. Saffron Walden has particular issues but congestion on local transport networks In peak hours is commonplace in large and small towns. Government will only intervene to ensure plans for growth are prepared if would be able to speed up the process.

8. Alexander Armstrong from Great Dunmow to make a statement.

9. Anthony Gerard from Newport to make a statement and ask the following question (please note that the question was not submitted by the deadline for questions to be accepted under the Access to Information Rules):

"Saffron Walden County High School and Helena Romanes School are effectively full and there is no likelihood of them expanding. Joyce Frankland is planned to take an extra year group but will then not expand further. Despite this ECC Education predict a net deficit of 130 secondary school places in Saffron Walden within 3 years.

1) If UDC's currently proposed spatial strategy is implemented, where will the additional children go to secondary school?

2) How has this been factored into the spatial strategy?

3) Where is UDC's education strategy for the next 15 years to support the Local Plan?"

Councillor Barker answered the question to state that the responsibility for the allocation of school places was a matter for Essex County Council and the matters raised would be taken into consideration.

10. Chris Audritt on behalf of Little Easton Parish Council to make a statement.

Statement on behalf of Little Easton Parish Council

Following the failure of the previous local plan in December 14 UDC were at pains to say that the workings of this new local plan would be open and transparent. Indeed one

of the first documents produced was a joint statement by the council group leaders saying and I quote

“We support recent work to establish a fresh approach to preparing a new local plan based on step-by-step, deliberative and transparent ways of working”

and

“We will do everything we can to set out clearly the justification for what it contains and the process followed in reaching the decisions taken”

It is an indication of how UDC have not met that commitment that one of the signatories to that document has felt it necessary to put forward the motion before you this evening. In effect saying there is a lack of transparency and confidence in the process.

The single settlement option at Easton Park directly affects the residents of Little Easton and indeed the very existence of Little Easton and yet there has been no direct consultation with Little Easton parish council on the prospect of this new town on Easton Park. The press and media seem more well informed than we are. The Easton Park settlement has been a developer led proposal we believe based on inaccurate and misleading information.

UDC have been at pains to stress that any new settlement should be to garden village principles one of which specifically says:

“The garden village must be a new discrete settlement and not an extension of an existing town or village”.

Yet at its closest point the Easton Park settlement would be just 100 yards or so away from the large town of Great Dunmow.

The lack of consultation and transparency by UDC has led to serious concern among residents and parish councils, as was shown at the recent parish forum, that decisions are being taken regardless of the facts and without full and detailed consideration of all the options.

Any new settlement site chosen should be the best available site, taking all factors into account, which meets the defined garden village principles and is in the best interest of the community not because it is the easy option and in the best interest of the developer.

We support the statement by councillor Martin Foley and agree that UDC cannot make any recommendation without there being a full and thorough study of the new garden settlement proposal located to the north of the district at Great Chesterford.

UDC need to learn from past mistakes and produce a local plan that is both robust and fully supported by the council and the community.

11. Louise Luke from Great Chesterford to make a statement and ask the following question:

Question: what steps are being taken to consider the environmental impact on S Cambridgeshire/Essex border of a new town approaching the size of Saffron Walden. e.g. improved sewage, water, improved transport facilities (buses, road capacity, M1 junction, rail capacity, station parking, cycle routes)

Answer: This will be addressed through the water cycle study, transport assessment and sustainability assessment and strategic environmental assessment work.

12. Mike Passfield on behalf of Elfreda Tealby-Watson, both of Great Chesterford, to make a statement and ask the following questions:

Firstly, I would like to register my interest in speaking although I will only be able to confirm my attendance on Wednesday depending on work commitments.

Secondly, I would like to note formally to Council that as both as a resident and former Councillor myself I appreciate all efforts (and as per the motion public statements of support for) towards transparency in any Council discussion and decision making.

Thirdly, I would like to submit the following questions:

1. *In view of the wish for transparency*

- a) what efforts were made by the District Council and their elected members to publicise this extraordinary meeting to members of the public*
- b) What will happen if the time allotted for public speakers – 15 minutes – is insufficient to include all those wishing to speak*
- c) How will time be allocated between speakers registered to speak*

A: These questions will already have been addressed by the Chairman

2. *Referencing comments regarding the need of many residents to travel outside Uttlesford for their employment (bullet 1) and then (bullet 3) the expected growth of the expanding high technology industries around Cambridge:*

- a) What steps will be taken beyond any statutory need to cooperate between authorities to establish potential developments, commercial or residential, outside Uttlesford boundaries that are under discussion but not yet in planning but which for the sake of best practice future proofing evidence should be considered with regarding to sustainability issues of traffic, water management and demographics*
- b) With reference to the comments regarding the M11 corridor and hi-tech industries, specifically what efforts are being made to establish the impact of developments under discussion for instance regarding Sanger and Smithson building proposals in South Cambridgeshire on the north of Uttlesford*
- c) What effort is now being made to publicise these possible South Cambridgeshire developments in the context of the proposal for the Chesterford site so that full and transparent evidence of any “pincer” development can be examined*

d) *What steps will be taken to gain demographic predictions or existing evidence of work destinations for Uttlesford residents across the district to support such statements regarding the increasing need/ tendency of residents to work outside the district*

A: Conventionally, only local plan proposals and committed development are taken into account. Proposals for major development by the Welcome Trust and others in South Cambs would be accompanied by strategic environmental and other assessments as part of any consideration through the development management process.

3. *Generally, for proposed sites across the district what account is being made of the need for supporting infrastructure for new large scale developments versus entire new settlements for example examining factors. {NB A recent example of difficulties encountered in such infrastructure planning has been education e.g. noted publicly last year the unbalanced demand for school places throughout Uttlesford with over-subscription and under-subscription in different catchments, again with problems for parishes in the north of the district widely publicized}*

A: The necessary infrastructure to support development will be identified. The planning system has ensured adequate school capacity in Uttlesford to support the delivery of growth.

13. Richard Westbrook from Ashdon to make a statement.

14. Neil Green on behalf of Clive Hopewell from Great Chesterford to make a statement and ask the following questions:

I would like to register my interest in the meeting on Wednesday evening but should I be unable to attend due to professional engagements then I wish the following points to be submitted:

1. *I believe there is great importance in keeping a green belt between Cambridge and Saffron Walden. We now have ribbon development from Sawston to Cambridge so to develop south of Sawston as proposed on the north Uttlesford site we would have risk developing urban sprawl to the boundaries of Saffron Walden itself. This comment is in response to the several mentions in the motion of workers travelling to or employment developments in South Cambridgeshire/ M11 border. Surely it is imperative that if we are trying to account for this we are in transparency discussions with those authorities to establish what is also being proposed for Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Suffolk to address those needs?*

A: The Duty to Co-operate between councils is the vehicle for considering such concerns.

2. *Re the motion commenting on the need for establishing the criteria on which sites are considered best for local plan developments, can Council clarify whether that process takes into account unbuilt developments which already have planning approval. Similarly, and in order to have a local plan that develops Uttlesford in a sustainable and balanced way across the District, appropriate to existing and historic built and rural environment and in anticipation of future factors, what*

evidence is being considered with regard to how many houses have been built/ approved per capita inhabitant ward-by-ward or parish-by-parish in the last 5 years? This would give an indication of the saturation levels per community to date, comparing e.g. village to town environments.

A: It does. A policy which sought to cap development in settlements based on percentage growth over the last 5 years would be arbitrary and subject to challenge.

15. Michael Culkin of the Thaxted Society to make a statement:

Statement by Chairman to UDC ECM Wednesday 16th November 2016

THERE IS AN UNHAPPY GROWING TREND TODAY, DRIVEN BY TECHNOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND UNSOUND POLITICAL PROMISES THAT WE CAN ALL GET WHAT WE WANT. UTIELSFORD IS NO EXCEPTION

WELL WE CANT. IF WE ALL DID GET WHAT WE WANTED WE WOULD NOT LIVE IN A DEMOCRACY BUT IN CHAOS.

WHEN IT COMES TO WHAT WE WANT, CLEARLY THERE ARE SOME WHO DO GET IT AND SOME WHO DO NOT BUT LETS BE CLEAR THEY ARE NOT ALWAYS THE SAME PEOPLE.

THE PLANNING SYSTEM, HOIST AS IT IS BY GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE A HOUSING SOLUTION NATIONALLY, IS IMPERFECT AND NOT TRULY FIT FOR THAT PURPOSE. HOWEVER GOVERNMENTS OF WHATEVER SHADE PERSIST IN THIS.

AND SO WE ARE LEFT SOME OF US WITH HOUSES WE DO NOT WANT AND SOME WITH NONE OF THE HOUSES WE DO WANT.

BUT THIS IMPERFECTION OF PROCESS DOES NOT OBVIATE ITS USE AND LIKE IT OR NOT WE ARE STUCK WITH IT.

BUT WITHOUT A LOCAL PLAN, ACCEPTABLE TO THE INSPECTOR AND GOVERNMENT WE ARE IN A FAR WORSE POSITION THAN WITH ONE SOME OF US DON'T LIKE.

WITHOUT A CURRENT PLAN, THIS SPECIAL CORNER MUCH ENVIED AND IN DEMAND, SIMPLY FALLS PREY TO SPECULATIVE AND PREDATORY DEVELOPMENT.

WE HAVE SEEN THIS IN THAXTED AND THE TOWN HAS SUFFERED IN THE ABSENCE OF AN UP TO DATE LOCAL PLAN.

IN THE END WE ARGUE THE WHERE AND NOT THE WHY. AND IN THE 'WHERE' IT IS CLEAR SOME WILL BE UNHAPPY. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO

THE GREATER GOOD, FOR ALL OF US, WE ARE BETTER OFF WITH A LOCAL PLAN AND SOME PAIN THAN NONE AT ALL AND WORSE...

LET CENTRAL GOVERNMENT MISTAKE PLANNING FOR DELIVERY OF THE IMPOSSIBLE. LET US NOT FOLLOW THAT EXAMPLE AND USE THE LOCAL PLAN AS A POLITICAL FOOTBALL!!!

