

**EAST AREA PANEL held at THE UNITED REFORM CHURCH GREAT
DUNMOW at 7.00 pm on 9 JANUARY 2008**

Present:- Councillor M A Gayler – Chairman.
Councillors S Barker, E Bellingham-Smith, C A Cant, R Clover,
C D Down, M L Foley, M J Miller and A M Wattebot.

Officers in attendance:- G Bradley, S Hayden, R Harborough, P Hunt, H
Joy, J Mitchell and Martin Stocks.

Parish Council and public representatives:- Roy Howland, David Howland,
Yvonne Crume, David Crume, Trudi Hughes, Christine
Johnston, Trevor Brown, Peter Watson, Anna Cranell, Jeffrey
Thomas, David Ainge, Linda White, Peter Elms, John Davey, E
Chiles, Ian Reed, John Lewis, Eileen Walsh, Philip Leeder,
Gareth Joice, Alan Thawley, Paul Odgers, Philip Milnure, Rachel
Leeder, John Oakshatt, Gwynn Davies, Patricia Richardson,
Michael Kingdom and Christopher Woodhouse.

EP31

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Councillor Foley referred to problems of litter collection in the Thaxted Area. He was advised that Environmental Services was in the process of reviewing the litter 'hotspots' in the District with a view to rescheduling the service. Members of the public were asked to contact the Environmental Services department if there was a particular problem in an area.

A member of Little Dunmow Parish Council asked why the approved plans for the Oakwood Park village hall had not been updated on the Council's website. He was informed that the application had been approved subject to a section 106 agreement and the plans would be put on line once the agreement had been signed.

A resident from Little Dunmow expressed concern about highway dangers at Pound Hill, Little Dunmow. Due to the increase in housing in the last few years there had been a substantial increase in traffic and speeding had led to a number of serious accidents. The road was still classified as a 'C' road but it should be reclassified as a 'B' road and speed measures put in place, and he asked how this could be achieved. The Chairman said that the Area Highway Manager would be invited to the next meeting and this issue and other points that had been raised at the previous meeting would be addressed at that time.

EP32

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Gower, E W Hicks, R Sherer and S Smith.

Councillor Barker declared a personal interest as a member of Essex County Council.

Councillor Gayler declared a personal interest as Chairman of the Dunmow Town Strategy Group.

EP33 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2007 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

EP34 BELLROPE MEADOWS THAXTED

The Council's Engineer updated the Panel on recent drainage issues at Thaxted. The parish council had been concerned at the ability of the existing foul drainage system to cope with the new development at the edge of the village. Anglian Water had now confirmed that the existing system was adequate and fit for purpose. There was always a risk of blockages in sewer pipes but Anglian Water wanted people to contact them if they were aware of any problems locally. Work had now started on the sewers in the Park Road area and this was expected to be finished in the next few weeks. Other problems that had been raised by the parish council were mainly concerned with surface water drainage and the Engineer said that he would continue to work with the parish council to resolve these issues.

Representatives of the Parish Council were still concerned at the number of flooding incidents in the parish, in particular at Park Street and Copthall Lane. They were advised that these were often surface water issues and therefore difficult to resolve due to the number of landowners involved. The legislation in relation to responsibility for flooding was very complicated and it was difficult to enforce a solution. Councillor Barker said it would be useful if a map was prepared showing all the drains in the parish and details of their ownership

It was agreed that the Council's Engineer would prepare a map of drainage ownership in Thaxted in conjunction with the parish council. The Panel agreed to write to the Secretary of State asking for clarification of land drainage legislation.

EP35 REPACEMENT OF EXISTING THAXTED DAY CENTRE

The Tenant Participation Officer, updated the panel on the current situation with regard to the provision of the new day centre at Thaxted. There was budget approval to replace the existing building with a new modern facility at a cost of £325,000. Tenders had been sought on the approved design from four companies but the sums had been significantly higher than the approved budget and it had been necessary to reappraise the scheme. Following discussion with officers and the end users, changes to the design had been proposed to make the building more cost effective whilst maintaining the needs and specification of those that would use the building. As the Council no longer employed an internal architect, the contract conditions had been changed to the new JCT D&B (design and build) contract, which put responsibility for design on the contractor. Bids had been sought for the new specification and it appeared likely that the cost would be within the budget.

The proposals would be considered by the Council's technical team and approved through the Community Committee. Eileen Walsh asked that a copy of the plans be sent to the parish council.

Ian Reed, the Chair of the Management Committee of the centre said that the need for the facility continued to grow and he hoped that the new building would now go ahead as quickly as possible. Councillor Cant asked if the high environmental specification would be compromised to achieve the budgeted price. She was advised that this had been the case although sustainable materials and construction methods would be used. The Council's Energy Efficiency officer was investigating the availability of grants to provide measures such as solar panels on the building.

EP36

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – CORE STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The Director of Development explained that process for producing the Local Development Framework which would replace the current Local Plan and set out how the district would develop in the next 15 – 20 years. The Council was currently preparing the Core Strategy which was a high level document which set out how Uttlesford would develop to 2024 and included relevant policies and options for growth. The plan had to be consistent with the East of England Plan and the themes of the Council's Community Safety Strategy

The process for preparing and consulting on the plan was defined by law. Various stages of consultation had taken place over the last 2 years so that the Council had now put forward 4 options for growth with a preferred option of 3,000 new homes at Elsenham, with 750 homes in larger towns and 250 in other villages.

The current consultation had commenced on 30 November and would run for 6 weeks. All houses had been delivered a leaflet, information was on the Council's website and there had been a workshop for Parish Councils. If further representations were received after the consultation period they might be considered, if they raised any significantly different points. At the end of the period officers would analyse the results and a proposal would go to the Environment Committee in March before being formally approved by the Full Council in April.

In relation to the East Panel there had been an indication that proposals might come forward for new settlements in the area. If these new proposals were accepted there would have to be a further round of consultation.

Once the final strategy was approved it would be submitted to the Secretary of State and there would be a final consultation on whether the strategy was sound. The Inspector would decide whether to have an examination in public, which would be likely to be held in September/October. Following approval by the Secretary of State consultation would commence on site specific proposals and development control policies.

A member of the public commented that the council, in looking at the high level options had exercised due diligence and asked how this process could accord with a developer submitting plans for a proposed new development at the end of the consultation period. The Director of Development said that the options put out were the Council's preferred options so many responses were likely to be counter proposals. Submissions for alternative new settlements were expected but would need to be received by Friday. No details had yet been submitted and officers didn't know whether they would be taken forward. They would however expect to receive from the developer a substantial document with technical reports. Residents from Little Dunmow hoped that the council would consider carefully any results from consultations that had been carried out by the developers. The Chairman said that it was open to the developer, just as to any member of the public, to respond to the consultation but it was intimately Members of the council that would decide the policy for Uttlesford.

A member of the public asked what would happen if the Inspector found the Core Strategy to be inconsistent with the East of England Regional Strategy as he understood that there was an indication that development concentrated in a single site would not be accepted. Councillor Barker replied that the preferred option did not concentrate all the houses in one settlement. The group had felt that the 3000 houses in the area north of Elsenham was the most sustainable option. She hoped that everyone had received their consultation leaflets as the Post Office had failed to deliver to about 4,000 homes. They had since been delivered by hand by and arrangements had been put in place to ensure that this didn't occur with any future consultation exercises.

A member of the public asked why so many homes were required to be built in Uttlesford. The Chairman replied that these numbers were set by the Government and if the Council did not allocate the houses it would be open for developers to try to push through their own plans. He said a group of District Councillors had recently met with Hazel Blears, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, to emphasis how difficult it was for a small rural district to accommodate this number of houses.

There was a further question asking why the Council was identifying a 3,000 house site when the core strategy was not meant to be site specific. The Director of Development replied that although the strategy talked about principles, it had to show that land was available to achieve them. He was then asked about the status of the consultation and whether policies were likely to change and replied that it depended on the strength and weight of the representations received.

There was concern expressed at the change to policy regarding edge of town retail development. It was confirmed that policy stated that retail could be considered at the edge of a town when the business could not be accommodated within the Town Centre.

There was general concern about whether the necessary infrastructure would be provided in the new developments, given the delays that had occurred at the Woodlands and Oakwood Park developments. The Director of Development conceded that there had been some problems in the past but

current legislation was more favourable in terms of Section 106 requirements and there was also a Bill being considered to put a tariff on individual houses in order fund infrastructure requirements.

A representative from Dunmow Town Council said that it would send a full response in response to the consultation but commented that it could not support any of the proposals. The Council was particularly concerned about the lack of relevant capacity studies to inform decisions as to where the houses should be allocated.

There was concern at the proposal put forward for 1200 houses at a new development called Chelmer Mead. Officers could not comment on this as they had not yet seen the proposals.

A question was asked about the proposed policies for employment and was advised that there were policies to promote local employment, protect existing sites, identify new sites and to look at a wider portfolio than just airport related employment

Councillor Miller asked if land to the west of the M11 had been considered as part of this process, or a shared policy with a neighbouring council. Councillor Gayler mentioned development near to the Stump Cross junction. Roger Harborough replied that these sites had been looked at but to sustain a settlement on a site west of the M11 would necessitate the building of more than the required number houses. Also in terms of the Cambridge sub region the neighbouring councils were not looking at developments toward Uttlesford.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by stating that the East Area Panel was concerned at the robustness of the strategy and the ability of the community to deal with the housing proposals in terms of the delivery of the necessary infrastructure. The Panel members agreed with this view.

EP37

EASTERN SECTOR UPDATE

The Director of Development informed the meeting that the development at the site was progressing and two issues had arisen. The lights at the car park in White Street had been particularly bright and disturbing to nearby residents. Timers for the lights on the perimeter of the car park had been provided and ways of reducing the glow were being looked at. A member of the public said that he had been disturbed by the use of the car park at night by bikes and skateboards and asked if consideration could be given to locking the car park in the evenings.

The second issue was the pedestrianisation of White Street. There was £35,000 available for surface treatment and the County Council was drawing up a scheme which would be forwarded to the Town Council for comments. A member of the Dunmow Strategy Group said that the Council's Architect had produced designs for a public space outside the library and asked if these proposals had been taken on board. The Director of Development said that these designs had not been shared with him but he envisaged some kind of town square that would be robust for vehicles but not dominated by the road. There was concern that the money available might not lead to the desired

quality of development and sources for additional funding might be required. There was general consensus that tarmac would not be appropriate in this location and some sort of paving or blocks should be used.

It was agreed that communication between the District Council and Dunmow Town Council should continue to achieve the desirable outcome.

EP38

STANSTED AIRPORT UPDATE

The Director of Development reported that the planning application for the second runway was expected before the end of the financial year. It would be submitted as one package including numerous applications, statements and studies. The application would almost certainly be called in but in the meantime the council would need to deal with the huge administrative task of processing the application and sending it out for consultation.

EP39

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The panel received a report which outlined related community development activities and schemes.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm.