

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE held at the COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 17 JUNE 2008 at 7.30 pm

Present: - Councillor S Barker – Chairman
Councillors S Anjum, C A Cant, R H Chamberlain, A Dean,
C M Dean, J F Cheetham, C D Down, E Gower, S J Howell,
R D Sherer and A M Wattebot.

Also present:- Councillors J E N Davey, J E Hudson, A J Ketteridge,
R M Lemon, D J Morson and C C Smith.

Officers in attendance: - J Mitchell (Interim Chief Executive), D Bradley
(Interim Head of Finance), D Burrige (Director of Operations),
R Harborough (Head of Planning and Housing Strategy), P Hunt
(Engineering and Safety Officer), M Perry (Assistant Chief
Executive), R Pridham (Head of Street Services), P Snow
(Committee and Electoral Services Manager) and A Webb
(Interim Director of Central Services).

**E1 PRESENTATION BY GREAT DUNMOW TOWN COUNCIL ON THE
PROPOSED DUNMOW TOWN SQUARE**

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, there was a presentation by Mr D Demery of proposals for the creation of a town square in Great Dunmow on land owned by the District Council. He spoke in detail about the nature and design of the scheme and referred to various plans on display illustrating the layout of the square in relation to the revised parking area and other facilities, including a new library, as well as to adjoining new housing. The scheme provided an opportunity for long term improvement of the area around the White Street car park.

E2 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Statements were made by Patricia Stevenson of Scott Wilson on behalf of Galliard Homes; Michael Kingdom on behalf of Stebbing Parish Council; and by Tamsin Lees and Jason Barlow as residents of Henham. A copy of their statements and questions are attached to these Minutes.

E3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K R Artus and H J Mason.

Councillor A Dean declared a personal interest as a member of EERA.
Councillor Cheetham declared a personal interest as a member of EERA and as a bus pass holder.
Councillor Barker declared a personal interest as a member of the Regional Housing Panel and of Essex County Council.

Councillor Cant declared a personal interest as a member of Stebbing Parish Council.

Councillor C Dean declared a personal interest as holder of a concessionary bus pass.

E4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2008 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to amendment of the word 'Frameworm' to 'Framework' in the heading to Minute E49.

E5 MATTERS ARISING

(i) Minute E50 – NATS Consultation

The Chairman said that copy of the County Council's response to the NATS consultation had recently been circulated.

(ii) Minute E47 – Rural Excellence Final Report

It was confirmed that proposals in response to recommendations in the Rural Excellence report would now be submitted to the next meeting.

E6 LEAD OFFICER'S REPORT

The Interim Chief Executive presented his report and confirmed that no matters had been referred to the Committee from either of the two initial area forum meetings. A number of matters of local interest had been discussed at those meetings, including eco towns and the LDF process.

Councillor A Dean asked about current trends in recycling. The Chairman said that January 2008 had been the Council's best ever month for recycling rates at 59.8%. She hoped that Uttlesford would soon be in the top ten authorities nationally and this was in large part due to the efforts of the previous administration.

It was agreed that further efforts were needed to get the recycling message across to the public. A new recycling leaflet would be sent to every household by the end of June and further information would be included on the website.

E7 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman updated Members on a number of matters of interest.

She had intervened to prevent a hole being backfilled at White Street, Great Dunmow as further work there was due to be carried out. Resurfacing work

would commence shortly at Market Place, Great Dunmow and would be completed before the Flitch Trials. She reported that the planning process for the civic amenity site in Dunmow was on track. A planning application was expected to be submitted by the autumn. Finally, she had attended a debate at the Local Government Association with senior civil servants on eco-towns and would shortly be meeting with the Housing and Planning Minister, Caroline Flint, together with the Leader, Mr Mitchell and Sir Alan Haselhurst MP.

E8 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was then adjourned for five minutes to enable Members to view the plans for the Great Dunmow town square proposal.

E9 WHITE STREET CAR PARK/DUNMOW TOWN SQUARE

When the meeting resumed, the Chairman introduced John Davey who had been elected as a new Member of the Council at the Great Dunmow North by-election on 5 June.

She then invited Trudi Hughes to outline the Town Council's aspirations in relation to the town square project. Mrs Hughes thanked Members and said that the idea for a town square had originated at Uttlesford and the Town Council was delighted to support it. The intention was to provide a quality environment to act as a focal point for local residents and this would have the effect of regenerating the immediate area.

She hoped that the project would be secured within the next twelve months and that it would be a development of which the town and the district could be proud. The relocation of disabled parking spaces would be a small price to pay to realise the scheme.

Councillor Smith said that he wished to add his support for the scheme. It would turn a slum into a pleasant public open space. The extra walking distance involved for disabled car users was extremely small and the library had confirmed there would be no disadvantage to customers. He appealed for the Committee's help in not wrecking the scheme.

The Chairman reminded Members that this Committee's remit was limited to the parking issue.

The Director of Operations spoke briefly to the report. She said that the three plans tabled at the meeting represented the existing layout, the Town Council's proposed scheme, and a possible means of incorporating some disabled spaces within the square. She referred to the risk analysis in the report and drew attention to the comments of the Access Group, included in full. A letter received from Mr D Matthews had been circulated to Members.

Members raised a number of questions about the operation of the blue badge scheme and the effect the proposal would have on those people concerned. In general, they agreed with the recommendation in the report that the Town Council should be asked to carry out a survey of public opinion before any conclusions could be reached.

In reply to a question, the Director of Operations confirmed that there was no intention to reduce the number of disabled parking spaces.

RESOLVED that Great Dunmow Town Council be requested to undertake a public consultation and risk assessment on the project before it was re-considered by this Committee in advance of a lease being considered by the Finance and Administration Committee.

E10

RESPONSE TO DCLG'S ECO TOWNS – LIVING A GREENER FUTURE CONSULTATION

The Head of Planning and Housing Strategy outlined details of the Government's consultation exercise following the publication of a shortlist of 15 locations to be considered for development as eco-town sites. One of the sites under consideration was at North East Elsenham and another was located at Hanley Grange, Hinxton, directly abutting the district boundary north of Great Chesterford.

The Council had, on 22 April, resolved to oppose the development of an eco-town north east of Elsenham, and to support objections to other locations detrimental to the district. He had prepared the report in the context of that decision and the report included a suggested response designed to support the substance of the resolution.

He went on to explain, as included in detail in the report, the basis on which the Government initially launched the eco-towns initiative; the relationship to the Local Development Framework Core Strategy preferred options process; particular issues associated with the sites at Elsenham and Hanley Grange; and the question of additionality in terms of the total requirement for new homes in the district.

In particular, he highlighted key differences between the Government's intention to make best use of brownfield land and to utilise public sector surplus land, and some of those sites identified in the consultation, such as north east Elsenham and Hanley Grange. In effect, he said, the Government had set up a bidding process in relation to specific locations, thus undermining local planning procedures.

The item was then opened to general discussion. Councillor C Dean insisted there was a direct link between the selection of Elsenham as a potential eco-town location and the Council's decision to choose the site as its preferred option for 3,000 new homes. Resources would be diverted, and local roads and communities damaged. The officers' report could apply equally to any

proposed location, not just to Elsenham. She would like to see a response more specific to Elsenham. For example, Elsenham was a greenfield site that did not fit with the criteria drawn up by DCLG. It would also be a bolt on to the existing community rather than a discrete settlement.

She referred to the intention that eco-towns would make good use of existing transport infrastructure. The development of an eco-town at Elsenham would depend on access to the M11 via Hall Road, but it was actually likely to lead to the use of other shorter routes along already congested country roads and would cause huge problems. The traffic assessments were totally flawed.

The Council would have no credibility if it chose to continue supporting the preferred option of 3,000 houses, whilst opposing 5,000 homes at the same location. There was also the inevitable connection with the development of Stansted Airport. She concluded by saying that there were grave doubts about the adoption of any single settlement solution in Uttlesford.

Councillor Morson thanked the Chairman for allowing him to speak. He thanked Mr Harborough for his detailed report and said this contained a credible response. However, he had two questions. The political groups had pledged unity on the eco-towns issue but strikingly different views were apparent. The main problem lay in option 4. The Liberal Democrat group opposed both developments. As a result of its support for option 4, the Administration was not opposing all large scale development in Elsenham and this was a clear inconsistency.

If chosen as an eco-town location, the Council would have severe problems in finding another location to accommodate 3,000 additional homes. The Council should send a clear message to Government that Elsenham was not a suitable location for large scale development.

His second question was over the role of Professor David Lock. Professor Lock had stated in the local press that an accommodation should be found in relation to the Elsenham site. He sought an assurance that there would be no accommodation for a third option that would place housing in Elsenham.

The Chairman commented that she understood the two proposals could not be entirely separated but there was still the question of additionality to consider as well as the due completion of the LDF process. To date there was no weighting of the responses received. It might prove to be the case that Elsenham was not the best place for the allocation of housing but this had to be a matter for local decision and not for the Government to impose.

Councillor Morson responded that the Council would have no credibility by maintaining its position on option 4. The Chairman said the Council would lack more credibility if it chose to withdraw from option 4 now.

Councillor A Dean urged Members to leave the recommendation open and consider this item together with the Core Strategy.

The Interim Chief Executive asked Members to bear in mind that they were not just awaiting the option 4 analysis, but also a number of technical assessments before they were able to make a decision. Members might well come to a different conclusion but the LDF process must be considered separately and the following item was there, at this stage, for information only. On the eco-towns consultation, the most important consideration was to influence ministers and civil servants by unpicking the assumptions in the DCLG paper and this was the thrust of Mr Harborough's report.

Councillor Cheetham proposed adoption of the recommendation in the officers' report. She said the two processes must be kept separate. A decision could not yet be made on the Core Strategy. The difference between the preferred option and the eco-town proposal was that the Council was in the driving seat in determining its Core Strategy. She recalled the proposal in the Regional Spatial Strategy in 2004 to place more housing in Dunmow and said the Government should refer to the advice of their inspectors at that time.

Councillor Howell seconded the motion. He said that he was on record in support of both a single settlement and of the site at Elsenham and Henham. He nevertheless maintained an open mind and would decide on the basis of the merits of the case. The eco-town proposal was different as it was not ecologically sound. The Government wished to steamroller it through with little opportunity to address the planning issues. The Council should address the specific issue of the eco-town proposal and not become confused with the local planning process.

Councillor C Dean proposed an amendment to include the following points in the Council's response:

- The site at Elsenham contained no brownfield land.
- It would not be a separate and discrete community.
- The motion could apply equally to any single settlement anywhere in Uttlesford; the case against Elsenham should be stated more clearly.
- Emphasise the opposition to option 4.
- Uncertainty that a single settlement of 3,000 houses was the right option for anywhere in the district.
- Concern about transport capacity issues.

Councillor Cant seconded the amendment. She was concerned that there was too much emphasis on Hanley Grange. South Cambridgeshire District Council would fight Hanley Grange but, if both Councils were opposed to that proposal, it would leave Elsenham more exposed. Uttlesford should oppose Elsenham more strongly.

Councillor Wattebot urged officers to beef up their representations about the inadequate state of public transport in the area. The Government was suggesting that residents would be fined for leaving an eco-settlement in their cars but this was not feasible given the lack of alternative transportation.

Councillor Chamberlain said it was vitally important that representations were made in respect of both sites. He congratulated Councillor Redfern for her work in relation to Hanley Grange. The Council's response should not confuse the Government with the issue of the 3,000 houses and must focus on the eco-town proposal. Uttlesford was under attack from many quarters. The Administration did not favour the imposition of any additional housing in the district but had been forced to seek to make provision for them. Irrespective of the LDF, the site at Elsenham was on the Government's agenda. The LDF discussion must be considered separately.

Councillor Morson said that he had received no answer to his second question. The option 4 decision had been used to justify the eco-town proposal and the two could not be separated. He again asked whether there had been any communication with Professor Lock?

The Chairman said that the Fairfield timeline went back to April 2007. She did not know about that proposal until after the option 4 decision had been taken. She had had no personal contact with David Lock or any developer.

The Interim Chief Executive confirmed that officers did have discussions with developers on a without prejudice basis.

The Leader said that any discussions with Fairfield would take place with officers. The difference between 3,000 and 5,000 houses was quite clear. He said the wording of the amendment was generally acceptable but he did not want any reference to the LDF. He was concerned about the possibility of legal challenge, especially if the LDF process was circumvented.

Together with the Chief Executive, he had attended a LGA briefing including representatives of all the councils affected by eco-town proposals. The extent of the opposition was not entirely clear; one district was in favour and some were ambivalent; the majority of councils did oppose the proposals and it had been agreed to liaise, especially with South Cambridgeshire.

There had been an eco-town debate at the LGA last week but Caroline Flint had not attended. His intention was to get the Minister to visit Uttlesford and see the area for herself. He emphasised that the Administration would fight the imposition of eco-town settlements and would do whatever was necessary to maintain full opposition.

The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that he saw nothing in the amendment that would expose the Council to the risk of Judicial Review.

The Head of Housing and Planning Strategy said that there was much in the amendment that could usefully be added to the Council's response. However, he advised that it would not be appropriate to include the point about a freestanding site as this referred to the provision of services and facilities, and whether the property abutted an existing settlement was not relevant.

Councillor C Dean maintained that it was important to include the extent of opposition to a single settlement at Elsenham, or elsewhere in the district.

The Chairman said she would be unhappy to accept reference to opposing a single settlement anywhere in Uttlesford.

The Interim Chief Executive said that the Council was reacting to proposals for eco-towns and there were two such proposals affecting Uttlesford. Both of these would have a harmful effect on the district's infrastructure. He advised Members to limit consideration to the matters in the report. The question of a single settlement was yet to be tested and could not properly be determined.

Councillor Cant was concerned that a conflict of interest might arise between David Lock's role as a Government advisor and his role in relation to the specific proposal at Elsenham. The Council needed to be absolutely clear about Professor Lock's position and to complain about it if there was a likely conflict.

The Assistant Chief Executive said that, in his opinion, it would be difficult to attack Professor Lock's position on the basis of the report he had produced.

Councillor A Dean thought that there was nothing in the amendment to cause concern. The site at Hanley Grange was the wrong location as South Cambridgeshire had already rejected it as being unsuitable. It was a simple acknowledgement that the process in Uttlesford was continuing and no final decision had yet been made.

The Head of Planning and Housing Strategy commented that the difference was that South Cambridgeshire had finalised their LDF Core Strategy. As a consequence, any housing to be provided at Hanley Grange would be additional.

Councillor C Dean asked to amend her amendment. She wished to maintain the position that the LDF consultation was still ongoing and there was considerable uncertainty about the suitability of any single settlement in Uttlesford.

The Leader agreed that the process was ongoing and that the Council was a long way from being able to consult on the Core Strategy but had reservations about the wording in the amendment.

The Interim Chief Executive stressed that no conclusions could be drawn about the siting of a single settlement anywhere in the district.

As proposer of the original motion, Councillor Cheetham spoke about which elements of the amendment she could accept. After further discussion, the following wording was settled upon as an amendment:

“that the Government be advised that the Council was still undertaking consultation around the Local Development Framework Core Strategy

process during which there had been considerable opposition to the Council's preferred option to place 3,000 houses at Elsenham; the site proposed for the eco-town development at North East Elsenham does not comply with the Government's intention to make best use of brownfield land; and there are inadequate assessments for transport capacity associated with the Elsenham site, both in terms of the local road network and local public transport provision."

Having been put to the vote, the amendment was declared carried. The substantive motion was then proposed by Councillor C Dean and seconded by Councillor Cheetham and was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the following points be made in the Council's response to the Government's consultation 'Eco-towns – Living a Greener Future':

- 1 The Council is opposed to North East Elsenham, Hanley Grange or any substitute location in the sub regions in which it sits being identified in a national planning policy statement as locations that have the potential to be an eco-town;
- 2 Local planning authorities should determine through their Local Development Frameworks whether there are local circumstances that would favour an eco-town as an appropriate way of delivering housing to meet identified needs and achieve quality in the built and natural environment, a sustainable form of development with jobs, services, facilities, public transport links, the opportunity to make trips by walking and cycling and reduce carbon emissions. Where there is the potential and need for a strategic scale development this should be identified through the Regional Spatial Strategy review process. The ultimate size of any eco-town should be established through the development plan process. The local development framework route would avoid the ambiguity about additionality;
- 3 The process of preparing a national Planning Policy Statement on eco-towns and encouraging the submission of planning applications is being rushed. It prevents the development plan system from testing the inter-relationships between new and existing settlements, the implications for transport planning and fitting with integrated spatial strategies and community strategies. It risks inadequate assessment of all the implications and prejudices the ability to secure the community involvement that is meant to be at the heart of the new planning system;
- 4 The wording of the above amendment.

E11

CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION

The Head of Planning and Housing Strategy presented for Members' information a report setting out an overview of the representations received on the Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation. The report was

accompanied by a summary of the representations received, listing the reasons stated for support and objection to the preferred option policies and the four growth options.

A total of 5401 representations made by 1671 people had been recorded on the Limehouse on-line consultation system. The problems with the data input, mainly to do with the difficulty of categorising the comments in the letters, were acknowledged in the report. Members were asked to note that a Comparative Sustainability Assessment would be presented to Members in the autumn.

Councillor Cant referred to the comments made at the beginning of the meeting by Patricia Stevenson about the proposal for Boxted Wood. She asked Members to note the reason why few objections had been made regarding this proposal. A packed meeting held in Stebbing had clearly demonstrated the concern of local people about this possible development. Had Boxted Wood been selected as a preferred option, she was in no doubt that the Council would have been inundated with objections.

Councillor C Dean said that the report had suggested that only residents of Elsenham and Henham had objected to option 4 but this was not the case.

Mr Harborough explained that the report was intended as an overview only; a more detailed report would follow and this would be the definitive statement of representations received.

Councillor A Dean said it was not a case of Elsenham and Henham versus the rest, or north against south, and hoped that it would be possible for everyone to work together to achieve a solution. The Chairman agreed that later in the year was the appropriate time for the Council as a whole to thrash out a solution and she was confident that could be done.

Attention was drawn to those many sites listed in the schedule to the report that were being promoted for residential development and it was noted that consideration of strategic sites would be fed into the Comparative Assessment.

The Head of Planning and Housing Strategy confirmed that a full report on the Preferred Options stage would come before Members in September with the final report in the following cycle. Members would then have to decide on the appropriate form of consultation to be undertaken.

E12

BUDGET MONITORING 2008/09

The Interim Head of Finance presented, for information, the Committee's first budget monitoring report for 2008/09, in accordance with the process agreed by the Performance Select Committee in April. He warned that it was too early in the financial year to make predictions of the outturn for the end of the

financial year, and that Members should concentrate on the monitoring of 2008/09 budgets as some of the 2007/08 figures were not yet finalised.

The Interim Chief Executive congratulated Mr Webb and Mr Bradley for the excellent work they had carried out in recent months to stabilise the Council's finances. The introduction of the new financial reporting system represented the beginning of the Council's financial recovery.

Councillor Cheetham asked about indications in the report that income for the disposal of bulky waste was well short of projections. The Head of Street Services confirmed that a revised estimate for this service would be necessary.

Councillor Cant asked about the implications for the Council of the recent sharp rise in the cost of fuel. The Interim Director of Central Services replied that cost increases of this nature could not have been predicted. The change in the ordering system being implemented was a big step change for the Council and would make it easier to interpret spending patterns.

The Chairman referred to a package negotiated with the County Council to help with the preparation and distribution of recycling leaflets. The use made of wheeled bins had increased to the extent that suppliers had been unable to keep up with the demand.

Members expressed satisfaction with the new budget monitoring system and agreed to note the reports submitted.

E13

CONCESSIONARY FARES

The Director of Operations reported on feedback received about the new national travel scheme for concessionary fares. In view of the responses received, she invited Members to consider adding to the scheme by funding a further 30 minutes to allow travel to commence at 9.00am, for those holding passes issued by the Council.

She also suggested that Members may wish to consider agreeing that new routes established from Stansted Airport would not qualify for concessionary travel unless agreed by this Committee. She said that the extension to the national scheme would have a minimal financial impact but that the cost could not be quantified at this stage.

Some Members agreed that the national scheme operated in a way detrimental to bus users in Uttlesford and the Council should fund the earlier start for concessionary travel proposed in the report. The Chairman said she hoped that, if agreed by the Committee, the extended scheme could start two weeks after a decision.

Councillor Cheetham then proposed that the officers' recommendation be adopted and the motion was duly seconded.

The Leader warned that other councils had suffered financial shortfalls as a result of funding the new scheme. Essex authorities had agreed on a 9.30am start time but some had now deviated from that agreement. He urged caution as it was not possible to predict how much the scheme would cost.

The Interim Chief Executive said that he would be attending a meeting the following day to consider the implications of the scheme. He suggested a trial period might be appropriate. The Interim Director of Central Services confirmed there would be an additional cost if the scheme was operated outside the core hours and said he would prefer to wait a year to enable the costs to be properly assessed.

A range of views was expressed by Members and it was not clear that a consensus could be achieved. Some Members took the view that in a rural area such as Uttlesford extra help to residents was needed over and above the national scheme. Other Members felt it would be better to first assess the scheme after a period of time.

After agreeing that the second part of the officers' recommendation should be deleted, the Chairman put the motion to the vote and it was agreed by a vote of 4-3. This was subject to a further check being made to establish that the scheme could be restricted to Uttlesford residents, and to the Chief Executive and Director of Operations being authorised to finalise details of the scheme in consultation with the Chairman.

RESOLVED that

- 1 extra funding is secured to enable the Council to operate an addition to the national scheme allowing for travel to commence at 9.00am, for those holding passes issued within Uttlesford, subject to a further check being made to establish the legal authority to restrict the scheme in this way; and
- 2 the Chief Executive and the Director of Operations be authorised to finalise details of the scheme in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee.

[Subsequently, officers realised that the above decision was ultra vires because it proposed an increase in budget, which the Constitution does not permit the Committee to do. In the interests of efficiency, the Lead Officer therefore referred the item to the meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee on 26 June 2008. The alternative would have been to refer the decision back to the next meeting of the Environment Committee on 16 September.]

The meeting ended at 10.45 pm.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(i) Patricia Stevenson

Patricia Stevenson of Scott Wilson on behalf of Galliard Homes made the following statement about a possible new settlement at Boxted Wood, to the east of Stebbing Green, and posed the two questions listed at the end of the statement:

Preferred Spatial Option

In regard to Uttlesford Core Strategy and consultation responses, I am here to highlight to the Committee Galliard Homes' request that the Council re-consider and re-consult on all reasonable locations for a new settlement. It appears that the Council selected a new settlement as their preferred spatial option without truly examining other potential locations with the District. Furthermore, it appears the Council is at odds with their preferred option of Elsenham. The minutes from full Council on 22 April 2008 states:

“RESOLVED that this Council is totally opposed to the development of an Eco Town north east of Elsenham, as proposed in the Department of Communities and Local Government’s consultative paper, “Eco Towns – Living a greener future” published on Thursday 3 April and will campaign to have this proposal removed from the shortlist.”

Reasonable Alternative Location to Meet Uttlesford’s Housing Numbers at Boxted Wood

Galliard Homes believes Boxted Wood, land east of Stebbing remains to be the best alternative for a new settlement. Boxted Wood can provide major benefits to Uttlesford and presents an opportunity to deliver significant development that would meet the requirements in the East of England Plan and the Core Strategy as well as being developed to exemplar environmental standards.

Galliard Homes is the process of preparing sufficient detailed information that will allow the Council to make an appropriate assessment of the planning merits of the Boxted Wood schemes. Also members will have received a letter from John August of Galliard Homes dated 10 June 2008 that makes the point that Boxted Wood compared to other residential proposals received a very low level of objection (e.g. Elsenham, Chelmer Mead, Option 3, etc). Therefore I would like to flag up to the committee that low level of objection associated with Boxted Wood does make this location a strong contender for a new settlement within the capacity of the A120 corridor.

In our view, a single new settlement remains the most appropriate and potentially least controversial solution to the housing numbers which the Council will have to meet. Many of the other residential locations fail to meet the advice set out in the latest guidance in the new Planning Policy Statement

12: Local Spatial Planning in terms of carrying public opinion in the preparation of LDF strategy documents, namely to “*ensure that strategies can be based on the community’s views and obtain community buy-in.*”

Way Forward

Galliard Homes and the Boxted Wood team would like to work in partnership with the Council to bring forward Boxted Wood through the planning system, including an Area Action Plan to ensure an innovate and sustainable development scheme is implemented and addresses Uttlesford’s current and future development needs.

Two Questions for the Council:

1. Can the Council confirm that they are willing to look at alternative locations for a new settlement (supported by a reasonable level of detail, so they can be assessed in an appropriate manner and backed up by sufficient evidence)?
2. Now that the new PPS12: Local Spatial Planning (May 2008) has been published, can the Council outline their way forward with their Core Strategy along with general timescales?

(ii) Michael Kingdom

Mr Kingdom spoke as Chairman of Stebbing Parish Council about the proposal for Boxted Wood. He acknowledged the considerable opposition to the development at Elsenham and Henham and sought to portray as an absurd myth the notion that there was no opposition in Stebbing to the proposal for Boxted Wood. There had been a large meeting in Stebbing and the parish clerk had since been inundated with e-mails and offers of help.

The proposed location was prime agricultural land and represented an act of violence against the English language and common sense. The scheme had no planning merit and would be totally opposed by the parish council and the residents of Stebbing. He said he was totally supportive of the residents of Elsenham and Henham in their opposition to option 4 and the eco-town.

(iii) Tamsin Lees

Miss Lees spoke in opposition to the separate proposals to develop land north east of Elsenham. She asked why, following the consultation process, the report did not contain real figures to emphasise the level of the response made. Nine parish councils had submitted objections but this had not been made clear in the report. She asked for an assurance that all objections would be taken into account.

In conclusion, Miss Lees said that, in her view, there were political reasons why the Council had supported option 4 but were opposing the eco-town.

(iv) Jason Barlow

Mr Barlow said he was a journalist on the Channel Four Dispatches programme, and was here as a resident of Henham. With his family, he had moved to the area two years ago as an idyllic area in which to bring up his children. However, there was nothing idyllic about the behaviour of the District Council, which had been both odd and comical.

It was clear that the LDF proposal had been a stepping stone for the eco-town proposal which was, in turn, a flimsy attempt by the Government to tarmac the whole of the M11 area. He could not understand how the Council could support option 4 and oppose the eco-town development at the same time. Option 4 was unworkable and should be withdrawn now. Otherwise it was apparent there was a political motivation behind the Council's actions that might prove fitting for a Tom Sharpe style dispatches script.