

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKING GROUP held at
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 9.30am
on 24 AUGUST 2010**

Present: - Councillor A J Ketteridge - Chairman.
Councillors C A Cant, J F Cheetham, J I Loughlin and H S
Rolfe.

Also present: Councillor C Dean.

Officers in attendance: - M Cox (Democratic Services Officer) R
Harborough (Director of Development), H Hayden
(Planning Officer) M Jones (Principal Planning Officer), and
A Storah (Agency Planner).

LDF4 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Godwin.

LDF5 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2010 were approved as a
correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**LDF6 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE
PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR THE CORE STRATEGY OF THE LOCAL
DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

The Principal Planning Officer had circulated a summary of the
responses that had been received in response to the public consultation.
It included all the responses to the questions in the main document and
amalgamated the responses to questions from the residents'
questionnaire. The document containing the full report of responses
would be available for the Environment Committee meeting on 7
September.

Some of the questions elicited a limited number of responses while those
concerning housing distribution and numbers received more replies; but
few new issues had been raised.

Although the consultation had been carried out before the changed
scenario with the Government's announcement on housing targets, the
results still contained much useful information which would be valuable
to support future decisions.

**LDF7 REVIEW OF HOUSING GROWTH FIGURES AND FUTURE WORK
PROGRAMME**

The working group considered the issues involved if the Council decided
to review the scale of growth as a result of the Government's revocation
of Regional Strategies and the RSS targets for housing and jobs growth.

The Chairman said that the Council had a policy that it did not agree with the RSS housing targets and had lobbied Ministers to that effect. This view had been borne out in the consultation which identified a strong body of public opinion against the level of growth set in the East of England Plan. He said that it was important that the Council came up with a housing growth figure that was appropriate for the district.

It had been agreed at the last meeting that a decision on the scale of growth should be taken before location of growth was considered and members discussed the issues that should be taken into account when arriving at that figure. These factors would include democratic, housing, economic, infrastructure and viability as well as environmental consideration and the vision for Uttlesford for 2021.

Members were made aware of the relevant studies which had identified the level of housing need, the amount of developable and deliverable land in the district and capacity of infrastructure to meet the scale of growth. These would be essential tools in this process.

The working group was of the view that future growth should reflect housing need and this would need to be defined. Members thought that a number of factors to be considered such as natural growth, those seeking housing, meeting employment requirements and inward migration.

Members were given details of housing completions over the last 10 years. It showed that on average there had been 375 homes built a year compared to the RSS target of 400 homes. There were also 2500 homes in outstanding commitments in the development process. Members emphasised that any future housing requirement would need to take account of the deliverability of the houses within the prevailing market conditions.

The group discussed the increasing need for affordable houses in the district. There was concern that these houses were often provided as a percentage of larger schemes when the deliverability of these was dependent on market demand. It was also noted that there was expected to be a reduction in the HCA grant and it was likely that in the future affordable houses would have to be provided by internal subsidy within the development. Members thought that providing affordable houses should be one of the Council's top priorities and asked that officers look at different ways that this could be achieved.

Members stressed the importance of public involvement in the process of determining the appropriate scale of development and the need to present the plans in the context of average annual completion rates achieved in the past. Presenting growth numbers as a 15 year total could appear alarming when in practise this level of growth was already being delivered. The Director of Development pointed out that the LDF guidance had not been withdrawn and still required core strategies to

look ahead for 15 years from their adoption date. The LDF would still be exposed to public examination and the council would need to demonstrate that it had conducted a sound and transparent balancing of the various factors. There would need to be community dialogue about what could be delivered locally. Initial consultation would be with town and parish councils.

The group was advised of the revised work programme and timetable that would be required if a review of the scale of growth of the district was to go ahead. It would be unlikely to be in a position to consult on the revised figures and spatial strategy until autumn 2011.

The Council would not be in a position to make any firm decisions on policy until this work had been carried out although it was likely that the situation might become clearer over the next few months when the outcome of the comprehensive funding round and the implications for infrastructure planning and the funding of affordable housing became clearer.

After the detailed discussion it was AGREED that the following views be forwarded to the Environment Committee

- The Working Group welcomes the abandonment of the RSS housing targets.
- In the light of the Government announcement, officers be asked to carry out a review of the housing growth figures with a view to reducing the number. It was likely that with fewer numbers the pressure for concentrating development on a single strategic site would be reduced.
- The Council should not progress its Core Strategy until it has carried out the review of the housing growth numbers.
- The working group recognises the need to provide affordable houses in the district and asks the Council to build on the work already underway and to explore further opportunities.

LDF8 **FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Chairman asked for a workshop to be held for LDF working group members to enable a detailed assessment of the housing growth figures. It was agreed to arrange a meeting for late September/early October.

Further workshops would be arranged for all members and town and parish councils in the autumn.

The meeting ended at 11.30am.