

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 PM on 30 OCTOBER 2007**

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

Officers in attendance:- M Cox, R Harborough, M Jones, J Mitchell, M Perry and A Webb.

**E22 PUBLIC AND ANSWER SESSION**

Prior to the meeting, the Committee heard statements from six members of the public. A summary of their comments is attached as an appendix to these Minutes.

**E23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Councillors Anjum, Artus, Cant, C Dean, Down, Godwin, Mason and Wattebot declared personal interests as members of their respective town or parish council.

**E24 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2007 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendments.

- (i) Minute E16, the second sentence be amended to read “he said that a figure of 102 additional authorised permanent pitches had been agreed for Essex with around 15 being located in Uttlesford”.
- (ii) Minute E21, the first line of the resolution be amended to read “resolved that a sum of £19,000 be considered to be included in the Capital Programme for 2008/09”.

**E25 BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Minute E19 – Decriminalised Parking Enforcement Policy**

Councillor Mason said that the issue of parking on green verge areas around Saffron Walden had not been referred to the North Area Panel. Officers would ensure that this matter was referred to the next meeting of the Panel.

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Committee had received a motion signed by Councillors G Sell, E Godwin, J Loughlin, D Morson, E Gower, A Dean, M Gayler, J Hudson, A Yarwood, A Wattebot, R Clover and C Smith which had read “motion to rescind the decision of the Environment Committee regarding the Local Development Framework”.

Councillor A Dean moved the motion and it was duly seconded by Councillor Wattebot.

Councillor C Dean then stated that as there was considerable concern from many quarters about the sustainability of a new settlement at Elsenham, option 4 of the Core Strategy should not rule out consideration of other sites for a new settlement. Also the hierarchy option should not be number specific at this stage. Several variations of option 2 and 3 could be possible and these options should be explored more fully. She proposed the following amendment to the motion which was duly seconded.

- (a) The decision made at the Environment Committee on 4 September be rescinded.
- (b) The Council’s options for consultation be:
  - (i) Distribution of development between the District’s three main settlements.
  - (ii) Distribution of development across a hierarchy of larger settlements and in smaller villages. The settlements identified should stand, but there should be no numbers attributed at this stage.
  - (iii) Development in a new settlement in the District. No specific sites should be identified at this stage.
- (c) The hierarchy option (ii) to be the preferred option.
- (d) The consultation on option should be comprehensive and include a wide range of stakeholders and forums. Sufficient information should be made available on each site for evidence based decisions to be made.

In answer to a question from the Chairman, the Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that the amendment added words to the motion and was therefore a valid amendment

Councillor C Dean spoke to the amendment. She said that when the motion had been put at the Environment Committee on 4 September, Councillor Ketteridge had thought that it was the best location for a new settlement but she did not agree; neither did the residents of all neighbouring villages and Friends of the Earth, who had no party political interest. Since that meeting, she had been looking at how the proposal for this site would work in practice,

particularly in relation to road and rail infrastructure. The developer had put forward proposals for road improvements but this had only served to exacerbate public fears. It appeared that the new roads were related to the second runway proposals. The existing railway provision was inadequate and was only likely to improve in the event of Stansted Airport expansion. A further argument put forward had been that the site could provide a new eco settlement. However, it had been noted that this type of settlement would require at least 4000 homes to be sustainable. Also, the proposed site was between two existing villages and could not be classed as a new settlement. There was the potential for coalescence of the settlements and this should be avoided. She said that if the Council did support the creation of a new settlement, then all other options should be explored.

She concluded that the hierarchy option was the preferred option, though it should not be too number specific at this stage. She thought a new settlement would open the door for even more homes and the site in Elsenham was not a suitable location. She hoped that there would be a wide ranging and detailed consultation for each of the options.

Councillor Wattebot had seconded the amendment and she asked that the positive and negative affects of all the proposals at a local level should be evaluated before a decision was taken.

The Director of Development then outlined the progress in the preparation of the Core Strategy for the District. This was part of the Local Development Framework and set out the broad vision for growth up to 2024. The process of preparing the plan was set out in law and was required to be consistent with the East of England plan. All the detailed proposals for development would be in line with the Core Strategy.

The process of preparing the plan had started in 2006. There had been a series of workshops and articles and a questionnaire had been sent to all households through Uttlesford Life. In January 2007, there had been further consultation on policy choice and growth options, and at that stage there had been nine options, one of which was to concentrate development in a single settlement. Following consultation on these options, officers had identified three themes and this had led to the three options that were presented to the Environment Committee on 4 September. At that meeting, a fourth option had been put forward. Since then there had been ongoing consultation and the matter had been fully discussed at the Area Panel, Scrutiny and Full Council meetings. The next step would be a statutory six week consultation before the Council agreed its draft Core Strategy. There would then be a further period of consultation before the plan was submitted to the Secretary of State with a possible public examination in 2008. It was only at that stage that the Council would look at site specific options.

He said that it was important that the Council could demonstrate a five year supply of land coming forward for housing development or the Council could be open to planning by appeal. He hoped that future housing provision in the district could be dealt with in a structured way.

The Chairman thanked officers for all the work they had undertaken in relation to the Local Development Framework. She said that officers had provided all the necessary information and had arranged a Member workshop, but this

had been very poorly attended. The Administration had been concerned not to create further developments, like Woodlands Park and Oakwood Park with 750 to 900 houses, which had not been able to achieve the required infrastructure. A new settlement would be more likely to provide the necessary amenities. She said the Council could not go forward with the amendment as it did not include specific proposals for numbers of houses. The Council did not want the 4,200 houses but was required to put forward a preferred option. The fourth option had not been put forward without careful consideration and consultation with officers on the legality of the proposal. She confirmed that she had written the motion and Councillor Ketteridge had put it forward on her behalf. The next stage of the consultation would give the public the chance to put forward what they considered to be the best option.

Councillor Howell, said he could not support the motion or the amendment. He thought the four options presented on 4 September had been well thought out. He had received many letters from local residents and felt these could apply to any area in the District, all faced similar challenges. He had first hand experience of piecemeal development in Saffron Walden which brought more congestion but no community benefit. He said that all councillors should have been aware of the single site option and the proposal for Elsenham. He had been a councillor now for nine months and had been aware of the possibility of development of this site since he had been elected. He said all four options would be put forward for the next stage of consultation and each had merit.

Councillor Cheetham said she was sorry to be making decisions again on the provision of houses in the District. She remembered the last agonising decisions made in relation to the extra 2,500 houses in 2002. She thought the Council should go forward with consultation on the four options. She said Elsenham and Henham were not unique in not wanting any new development but she still considered a single settlement to be the best option.

Councillor Godwin said she had been shocked at the meeting of the Environment Committee when the Elsenham and Henham development had suddenly become the preferred option. Having looked at the proposal since that meeting, she was concerned that the Council was concentrating development in one area of the District. There was already significant development in Stansted, with the Rochford Nurseries site and all the extra traffic would feed onto the same roads. This would create congestion problems and she was also concerned about the coalescence of the various settlements. She thought there were better ways to absorb the extra housing. On that basis, she could not support the amendment.

Councillor A Dean referred to Government guidance in PPS12, paragraph 4.1.3 which stated that the Council should build consensus through continuing community involvement. He said that this decision had split the community and the Council. Of the nine options for development, the option for a single settlement had been bottom in the results of the public consultation. He said the proposal did not meet the requirements for an eco settlement which should be freestanding and have easy access to transport routes. He asked the Council to look at alternative locations near the A120. He thought that the details in the officer's documents had not been discussed in a meaningful way with Members of the Council and more work was required. He was also

concerned that if consultation was to start in November, it would fall over the Christmas period when many people were engaged in other matters.

Councillor Chamberlain said that personal attacks and threats were not helpful and there should be a fair debate on this matter. It was the Government that was insisting on these houses and it was not just Elsenham and Henham that were under discussion. In the paper for 4 September, Elsenham had been referred to in detail and there had been much misinformation that option 4 had come out of the blue. He said that if the Council did go with a one settlement option, it was essential that it was properly planned and had the corresponding improvement in infrastructure. There was a statutory timetable in preparing the Core Strategy and the Council had to come up with a preferred option. Now it wanted to hear the residents' views. He suggested that residents should also write to Go East and the appropriate minister to express concern at the number of houses being allocated for this district.

Councillor Morson was angry that Members were inferring that all four options would be treated equally when the Elsenham site had been named as the preferred option. He understood that the Council had a difficult decision, but he expected a decision to be made on proven evidence and sufficient public consultation. Option 4 had not been on the agenda for the meeting of the Environment Committee, nor put forward by officers, but appeared as a result of a Conservative Group meeting so there had been no openness in the process. He conceded that all Members would fight to prevent development in their own ward, but it was the way that the decision had been arrived at that really concerned him. He said that external agencies would be looking carefully at how this fourth option had been introduced. There had been no paperwork, no reasons as to why this site had been chosen, no support from the County Council or the Liberal Democrat Group. The arguments that had been put forward were unsound. There was no need for a new secondary school in the area and the suggestion of an eco system was flawed as this required 4,000 to 5,000 houses. There had been inadequate consultation, the South West Area Panel had been denied a workshop and the initial request for a special area panel had been denied. The subsequent committee process had been a fiasco and it was time for the Council to take stock and reconsider its decision. Councillor Wilcock agreed with these comments and said there should be a proper debate over the fourth option and queried the timing and style of the public consultation.

Councillor Rolfe said he respected why so many people had attended the meeting, but said that emotion should be taken from the discussion. 3,000 houses were proposed in Elsenham, but 6,000 would be located elsewhere. Some had already been built and development would be concentrated in areas of the District. The decision taken by the Administration had not been personal. The third option in the report to the Environment Committee on 4 September had mentioned the start of a new settlement in Elsenham, so if a single site was to be an option it would be inconsistent to suggest a different site in the District. There were still three stages of the process to go, but at this stage, it was necessary to name numbers and put forward firm proposals. He realised that the decision meant a huge amount to each affected community and he wanted the Committee to understand the direction of intellectual travel. He said there had been logic to the process and it had been fully debated. He reported that Sir Alan Haselhurst, together with members of

the Administration was attempting to arrange a meeting with the Minister for Housing to discuss the Council's concern at the amount of new housing being allocated for the District.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the next stage of the consultation would be set out in an issue of Uttlesford Life and would be sent to all households. She hoped that all parties would have an input into the wording of the consultation.

Councillor C Dean then summed up the reasons for her amendment. She had not expected a single site to be chosen as the preferred option because it had come at the bottom of the public consultation, and at a meeting of the South West Panel, it had been stated that a new settlement would need 10,000 houses. She realised that housing was needed in the District, but there was a choice as to where it was located.

She asked for clarification as to whether specific numbers and locations should be included in the Council's options at this stage. The Director of Development replied that the Council needed to move forward from broad principles. The next stage of consultation was required to be more specific in terms of numbers and location.

The amendment was then put to the vote and was lost by six votes to nine.

Councillor A Dean then spoke to the motion. He considered that the Committee should rescind the decision of the meeting on 4 September to allow there to be further investigation and consultation on option 4. Councillor Cheetham replied that for all the reasons set out during the meeting, the four options should go forward to the next stage of consultation.

The motion was put to the vote and was lost by six votes to nine.

The four options for growth agreed at the meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> September would now go forward for public consultation

E27

## **LEAD OFFICER'S REPORT**

The Committee was advised of matters arising from the Minutes of the last meeting that were not on the agenda and other information of relevance. In relation to the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Structure Plan, Councillor Cheetham said she was aware that policy RS14 had not yet been signed off. The Director of Development replied that there would be no harm resulting from this, as the policy was robust in the Local Plan and Government policy was likely to supersede this policy.

Councillor C Dean had understood that a half hour parking tariff had been agreed for the Crafton Green, Stansted car park and asked why this had not been included on the new machines that had recently been installed. Officers agreed to get back to her with this information. Councillor Barker said that meetings were planned with Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Stansted regarding changes to the car park fee structure.

E28

## **BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT**

The Acting Chief Financial Officer presented a report which gave details of the Committee's spending and income compared to budget for the period 1 April to 31 August 2007. It was noted that this information had been reported to the Finance and Administration Committee on 20 September and some of the figures had been updated since then.

In answer to a question from Councillor Barker, the Director of Development explained that the income from the Planning Development Grant referred to this year's award and would be allocated to areas of shortfall and expansion. He added that consultation was now taking place with regard to a revised grant entitled the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant. He would report more details to Members when they were known. In relation to waste management, the Acting Chief Financial Officer said that the budget was currently being reviewed and he understood there was no longer a projected overspend.

E29

## **SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY**

The Committee was advised that the Local Development Scheme included five supplementary planning documents (SPD's) that the Council would prepare as part of the new Local Development Framework to supplement policies in the Uttlesford Local Plan. The Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy SPD was the last of these documents and would provide developers and applicants with additional advice and information about the implementation of policies, GEN2 and ENV15 in the Local Plan.

Councillor Chamberlain proposed an amendment to the wording of the second sentence of paragraph 2.24 of page 87 relating to wind energy to read:-

“In considering proposals for large scale schemes, the Council will not support proposals in locations when environmental, economic and social impacts can not be addressed satisfactorily”.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

RESOLVED that Members adopt the Supplementary Planning Document, as amended, to form part of the Uttlesford Local Development Framework; as a supplement to the Uttlesford Local Plan adopted in January 2005, subject to minor editorial changes.

The meeting ended at 10.10 pm.