

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKING GROUP held at
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 9.30am
on 5 OCTOBER 2012**

Present: Councillor J Cheetham – Acting Chairman.
Councillors S Barker, K Eden, J Menell, V Ranger, H Rolfe
and D Watson.

Also attending: Councillor R Chambers.

Officers in attendance: M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R
Harborough (Director of Public Services), H Hayden
(Planning Officer), S Nicholas (Senior Planning Officer), A
Storah (Planning Officer) and A Taylor (Assistant Director
Planning and Building Control).

LDF19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Ketteridge and
E Oliver.

LDF20 MINUTES

Subject to an amendment to show that Councillor Watson had been
present at the meeting, the minutes of the meeting held on 14
September 2012 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct
record.

LDF21 BUSINESS ARISING

i) Minute LDF13 – Gypsy and traveller sites

In answer to a question from Councillor Menell, it was confirmed that the
needs assessment was expected to commence in the New Year. It was
explained that the call for sites was continuing as it was important for the
Council to be seen as moving forward on this matter in line with the
agreed timetable.

LDF22 DRAFT ECONOMIC STRATEGY

The working group had received a copy of the strategy, which was
currently out for consultation. It had been created in consultation with
local businesses and partners to identify the strengths, opportunities and
issues that the Uttlesford economy faced and how the District Council
and partners should help in its growth and development. The strategy
focused on delivering a few things really well, where a real impact could
be made. The funding for delivering the strategy would come mainly

from the £100,000 High Street Innovation Fund granted to the Council by Central Government to use to provide support for business across the district.

The document would be amended to include comments received from the consultation and the issues raised at the Business Forum on 17 September.

Councillor Barker said the Strategy placed emphasis on the provision of fast broadband but she felt a more pressing issue was the poor mobile phone signal in parts of the south of the district. Councillor Rolfe said he appreciated this problem but a reliable broadband connection was important for businesses. He explained that there was not a huge amount of money available to support the strategy but the allocation of the funds gave a signal that the district was striving to improve and would be working with partners to identify what was required.

Councillor Watson had understood that the High Street Innovation Fund was to be directed more toward town centres improvements. He was informed that it was initially given to assist in bringing empty business properties back into use, but it was not a ring fenced grant. Councillor Watson also mentioned the intention to promote tourism and the financial limitations of the TIC which was now run by the SW Town Council. He was advised that the intention was to work with the Town Council and partners with regards to funding tourism in the district.

Members were asked to send any comments on the strategy to the Assistant Director Planning and Building Control before the final draft was considered at the Cabinet meeting on 25 October 2012.

LDF23

CONSULTATION RESPONSES AND OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS ON SELECTED POLICIES

Members considered a report giving details of representations received in response to the Draft Local Plan in respect of employment and retail policies. The Assistant Director Planning and Building Control took members through the report and explained the officer comments and highlighted where there were recommendations to amend the supporting text and policy. Any comments made would be fed into the proposed changes to the Draft Local Plan, which would be presented to Cabinet in due course.

Members noted the proposed changes and commented in respect of the following areas:

i) Employment Strategy Policies

Paragraph 10.2 – Employment Land Review

Councillor Eden questioned the forecast for the number of future jobs, and the evidence on which this assumption had been based as he thought the numbers were unrealistic and would be very hard to achieve. The meeting was told that the study was based on the East of England

forecasting model which was updated annually and provided a continual supply of new data. This was a long term trend based model, taking account of growth patterns expected by the different sectors. This included growth in the service sector which would be driven by demographic factors. Councillor Rolfe said that job creation aligned with housing growth was realistic and stood scrutiny and this economic scenario had been the basis for the housing numbers.

Employment site – Wendens Ambo policy 1

Councillor Menell said there was local opposition to the proposed employment site in Wendens Ambo because it was on the edge of the village, in a prominent location and would cause traffic disturbance in the village. She asked if thought had been given to refurbishing the existing Bearwalden site that was central to the station. Other members referred to the need for high quality office accommodation, that the site was in a prime location, well designed and attractive and there was a lack of appropriate sites elsewhere. A question was asked about affordable housing being provided on the site.

It was agreed that officers obtain further information with regards the Bearwalden site and issues around land release/affordable housing but for the time being the draft policy be retained.

ii) Retail

Development Opportunity sites, Saffron Walden Great Dunmow and Stansted

The text outlined further details of development opportunity sites in these communities and members discussed their feasibility. The maps had defined the areas of town centre uses and identified primary and secondary frontages. Members agreed with the policy to protect Class A1 town centre uses on the primary frontages.

The working group thanked officers for their work in preparing the document and were pleased that on the whole there had been a good reaction to the consultation.

LDF24

ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Councillor Watson said that the policies discussed at this meeting were not those being aired in public and in the press. There was local concern about the housing numbers and site allocations and figures and plans produced elsewhere were now in the public domain. The census figures appeared to show a requirement for 1200 more houses over the plan period but this had not yet been discussed by the Council.

The Chairman said that the Council's response to the representations on housing allocations would be informed by studies that were still to be completed: the water cycle study, the final stage of the demographic study and the highway assessment. The working group agreed that it would be premature to comment on this issue until the relevant information was available.

LDF25

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Friday 19 October at 9.30am.

The Chairman said there had been a request at the recent Council meeting for LDF meetings to be held in the evening to make it easier for more members of the Council to attend. It was agreed that an evening meeting would be sensible when more contentious matters were due to be considered. An evening date would be arranged for the November or December meeting.

The meeting ended at 11.45 am.