

**NORTH AREA PANEL held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN AT 7.00 pm on 8 JANUARY 2008**

Present:- Councillor J E Menell – Chairman.
Councillors R H Chamberlain, K L Eden, S J Howell,
A J Ketteridge, H J Mason, J A Redfern, H S Rolfe,
S V Schneider, A D Walters, P A Wilcock and A C Yarwood.

Officers in attendance: G Bradley, J Mitchell, C Roberts, J Snares and
J Starr.

Also present:- Jeremy Rose – Newport Affordable Housing Scheme and
Pat Wilkinson – EcoHomes.

Representatives from the Parishes:-

Arkesden	K Barwood
	R Higgins
Chrishall	R Keeling
Great Chesterford	P Fentem
Debden	D Matthews
Hempstead	S McCarthy
Langley	K Rivett
	M North
Newport	C Griffin
Littlebury	S Sproul
Quendon and Rickling	M Atlee
	R Bedborough
Saffron Walden	R Freeman
	M Hibbs
Widdington	R Darling
Wimbish	M Young

NP25 QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The Chairman, Councillor Menell, welcomed all present and opened the question and answer session. She asked for comments on the different room arrangement.

Councillor Wilcock asked whether it was established that Saffron Walden was the best venue for North Area Panel meetings and the Chairman explained that most responses to the questionnaire had said that it was the most suitable venue. The Panel discussed the pros and cons of Saffron Walden and other venues and it was decided by a show of hands to continue to meet in Saffron Walden.

NP26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors S Anjum,
Councillor D Sadler and County Councillor S Walsh.

Members of the Panel declared personal and non-prejudicial interests as follows:

Councillor J E Menell, as a member of Littlebury Parish Council and Chairman of the Buffy Bus Association.

Councillor Menell commented that the Community Development report referred to the Buffy Bus for information and said that if discussion ensued she would leave the meeting because of her personal interest.

Councillor A C Yarwood, as a member of Newport Parish Council (Housing).

NP27

MINUTES

The Chairman of the Committee informed the meeting that Mr M Young had asked for an addition to be made to the fourth paragraph on page 297.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 October 2007 be approved and adopted, subject to the addition of the words 'but remained concerned about speeding in villages and asked that more vehicle activated signs could be provided' at the end of the fourth paragraph on page 297.

NP28

BUSINESS ARISING

(a) Minute NP22 – 20mph speed limits

In answer to a question from Councillor Wilcock the Director of Planning said that the implementation of these speed limits would be pursued with the Highways Authority.

In answer to a question from Mr R Freeman the Chairman confirmed that Councillor N Hume had looked at the natural traffic calming possibilities at Littlebury, but that this was not being pursued due to the financial situation. Councillor Wilcock informed the meeting that Newport Parish Council was provided with training equipment in this context by the police free of charge. Mr M Young added that under the Speed Watch Scheme cameras and signs were shared with neighbouring villages.

Mr Freeman suggested that targets should be set for evaluating the impact of switching off the lights in Uttlesford and Maldon so that their success or failure could be measured.

The Chairman suggested that each parish and town council should make their own comments to the highways area office on this matter.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE OPTIONS PREFERRED STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The Panel received a presentation by the Director of Development, Mr Mitchell, as follows

- “Each local planning authority is preparing a Local Development Framework. This is a folder of documents that sets out how the local area may change over the next 15-20 years.
- The new planning system of Local Development Frameworks has been designed to streamline the local planning process and promote a proactive, positive approach to managing development.
- We are preparing what is known as the Core Strategy. This will set out a vision for the District up to 2024 and contain the policies that will be used to decide how Uttlesford should develop over the next 15 years and more. The policies in the Core Strategy must be consistent with the East of England Plan which is the development strategy for the whole of our region, and the Community Strategy (Uttlesford Futures) which has the key themes of community safety, conservation of the environment, health, transport and economic well being. All the other planning documents in the Local Development Framework must be in line with the Core Strategy.
- The process we are following is defined in law – we do not have an option of not preparing an LDF.
- We started work early in 2006 with an article in the Spring 2006 edition of Uttlesford Life and a series of workshops with parishes and other representatives of the community.
- We started consultation on policy choices and growth options in January 2007. That document contained 9 options, one of which was to concentrate development in a single settlement, and the broad locations identified were: Stebbing, Elsenham/Henham and in the vicinity of the airport.
- The Council is consulting on 4 options –
 - 1 Distributing development between the 3 main settlements, with 1600 dwellings at Saffron Walden, 2130 at Great Dunmow and 470 at Stansted Mountfitchet.
 - 2 Distribution based on a hierarchy of settlements – Great Dunmow 1000, Saffron Walden 1200, Newport 200, Stansted 30, Elsenham 750, Thaxted 60, Gt Chesterford 80; Priors Green (Takeley) 750; villages 130.
 - 3 Great Dunmow 1000, Saffron Walden, 1200, Newport 200; Stansted 30; Elsenham 1440; Thaxted 60; Gt Chesterford 80; Little Canfield.
 - 4 3000 houses in a new settlement at Elsenham, with 750 in larger towns and villages. This is the preferred option.
- Consultation on the 4 options commenced on 30th November 2007 and finishes on Friday 11th January 2008. We are carrying out that consultation in accordance with the Scheme of Community Engagement, adopted by the Council in July 2006 having been considered sound by the Planning Inspectorate.

- All households should have by now received a copy of the consultation leaflet, setting out the 4 options and directing people to the main consultation document.
- An invitation was sent to all Parish Councils to a workshop on the proposals which was held at the Council Offices on 12th December.
- There were press releases and advertisements.

THE NEXT STEPS

- After the close of consultation we will analyse and assess the results and present a Core Strategy for approval by the Council in March.
- Once the Council has approved the Core Strategy there will be a further round of consultation and at the same time it will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities. If the Secretary of State decides it appropriate there would be an Examination in Public of the draft Core Strategy, commencing in September 2008. Unlike the superseded local plan process, this would only examine the soundness of the strategy, not the merits of competing proposals.”

Mr R Freeman suggested that option 4 was based on deliverables which were not within the Council’s gift, for example frequency of trains, healthcare facilities and bus services for the new settlement, all of which were outside the scope of the Council’s control. The Director of Development answered that all options presented dilemmas. There was an improvement plan for the West Anglia Line. Healthcare and bus services would be financed through the grant of planning permission. Option 4 would be regarded as providing greater economies of scale for infrastructure provision.

The Director of Development confirmed that regard must be had to housing need in assessing the options. The cost of the infrastructure would be relative to the size of the development.

Councillor A J Ketteridge commented that there would still be 1,200 houses to be allocated throughout the District if the Council opted for the proposed new settlement at Elsenham.

The Chairman of the Committee informed the Panel that Members of the District Council had gone to meet Hazel Blears to draw her attention to the concerns of the Council in this matter.

NP30

HOUSING IN UTTLESFORD

The Panel received a presentation by Jeremy Rose about Newport Affordable Housing Scheme which had been a great support to himself and his family as well as many other people in the vicinity of Newport; by Pat Wilkinson about EcoHomes which were built by Touchwood Homes, his building company, with the objective of providing homes with the absolutely minimum requirement for use of energy; and from Judith Snares of the Uttlesford District Council Housing department on the choice based letting scheme, whereby tenants were given the opportunity of selecting from a sheet of properties those for which they wished to express an interest.

Questions were invited from the floor and Miss K Barwood drew to the attention of the Panel the situation of elderly people with large gardens and no hope of getting a small place in their own village. At the request of the Chairman, Councillor R Chamberlain spoke on this subject and recommended the Council's self contained flats at Vicarage Mead.

Mr M Hibbs reported that a property management company was refusing housing benefit tenants. Officers agreed to investigate.

Councillor A C Yarwood asked that an item be placed on the agenda for the construction of new council houses in view of the reduced council housing stock caused by the right to buy.

Councillor R Chamberlain informed the meeting that only a very few houses were sold each year now and that rented accommodation was the area of greatest need for proper handling of social housing. It was important that the Council considered a housing needs survey and examined how the Council met its housing need.

In answer to a question from Councillor Redfern, Judith Snares gave an indication of the number of applications made for different types of council property under the Choice Based Letting Scheme.

Members noted that officers had worked very hard to produce the Choice Based Letting Scheme and that there was a tradition in the Housing Department of helpfulness and provision of excellent service to tenants.

NP31 **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

The Panel received a Community Development Report for information and the Chairman drew attention to the references to the Play Strategy and the Uttlesford Youth Forum.

NP32 **OTHER BUSINESS – CLOSURE OF POST OFFICES**

The Chairman informed the meeting that representations had been made regarding the closure of the post office at Rowntree Way. It appeared that usage of the Quendon post office was very low. The situation would be kept under review.

The meeting ended at 9.08 pm.