

UTTLESFORD PLANNING POLICY WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.00pm on 30 MARCH 2015

Present: Councillor H Rolfe - Chairman
Councillors S Barker, P Davies, K Eden, S Harris, S Howell, J Loughlin, E Oliver and J Salmon.

Also present: Councillors C Cant, J Menell, V Ranger and J Redfern.

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Director of Public Services), H Hayden (Planning Policy Officer), S Nicholas (Senior Planning Policy Officer), A Taylor (Assistant Director Planning and Building Control) and A Webb (Director of Finance and Corporate Services).

PP20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Lemon and J Salmon.

Councillor Barker declared a non- pecuniary interest as a member of Essex County Council.

PP21 MINUTES

The working group considered the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2015.

Councillor Menell, Steve Coltman, John May, Joan Morgan and Tina McLean spoke on this item, raising concerns at the way that the discussion had been recorded and the subsequent action that had been taken. Copies of the statements and/or summaries of the comments made are attached at the end of these minutes.

The Chairman replied to the comments made by the public speakers. He said the council was absolutely clear of the depth of feeling of the community and he felt the recording of the meeting could have expanded on the comments made. However, it was important that the council followed the correct legal process. He said the call for sites was part of the first process for the new Local Plan but it would not delay the decision on the 5 Acres site. He appreciated that the date of 31 March was unfortunate but in any event, the information from the applicant was not available to bring to this meeting. He apologised if there had been a misunderstanding and the impression given that there would be a decision before May.

Mr Coltman said he understood that the other three sites in the report to the last meeting had not been approved as the report was just for noting. Councillor Rolfe

said the working group had not objected to the recommendations in the officer's report so these sites would continue in the process until a final decision on site allocations was made by the new council.

The Assistant Director Planning and Building Control said the process had been difficult and taken longer than he had hoped. There was outstanding evidence in relation to the 5 Acres site and the landowner had been given to the end of the month to provide this information. Officers had been in contact with the Environment Agency and the landowner's consultant and confirmed that the work had been commissioned. Once it had been received this report would be made publically available on the website.

The information requested had been in relation to the technical aspects of flooding and the mitigation measures. The next step would be to look at whether these measures would impact on the protected lane and highway safety and in this respect the Environment Agency and Essex Archaeology would be consulted.

In relation to the protected lanes, he confirmed that these were the responsibility of UDC. However, the original study of the lanes had been led by Essex CC archaeology, so the council looked to them for professional advice. In addition to the comments made in the Peter Brett report, the council had also consulted ECC archaeology directly on the last consultation.

He explained that when the new working group was set up after the election it would carry out visits to all the sites, consider the new evidence and the comments made by the statutory agencies. There would then be an officer recommendation on the 5 Acres site which would flow into the allocation process, which was expected to be concluded around the end of the year. He confirmed that the working group could not make decisions, only recommend to Cabinet, note or request information. Officers wanted to draw a speedy conclusion and with the robust information being available. It would then be for councillors to take the decision on which sites to allocate before going out to further public consultation.

The Chairman confirmed that working group would be visiting the sites in parallel to receiving the additional reports, so hopefully by June/July 2015, the residents would be informed of the officer's recommendation on the 5 Acres site.

Councillor Loughlin thought the working group had agreed to visit the sites before the end of the council year and that it would have been helpful to have done so. The Chairman said that as the additional information was not yet available it would not have been possible to make a decision prior to May.

Councillor Barker asked how the determination of the 5 Acre site related to the new call for sites process. She was advised that two processes were separate and that recommendations would be made on all the sites in the present consultation before any new sites were considered.

Councillor Howell was of the view that no decision had yet been made on any of the sites and that at the last meeting the officer's recommendation in relation to the sites in Radwinter had just been noted.

He understood that the legislation on the definition of Gypsies and Travellers for planning purposes had been blocked, and if so this was disappointing. He had also asked for information on a statement made at the last meeting that Cotswold Council had chosen not to identify specific sites.

The Assistant Director confirmed that the legislation not been passed and it was uncertain whether it would progress in the new Parliament. He clarified that as Cotswold Council had already identified sufficient sites it had not been required to allocate at the initial stage. It had also opted to look at a broad area of search rather than identifying specific sites. It was however essentially following the same process as all other councils.

Councillor Dean recalled that the Council meeting on 26 February had promised that site visits would take place but this had not occurred. He said the way this process had been handled did not accord with the promised transparent and consultative approach.

Councillor Oliver said that the residents of Arkesden and Wicken Bonhunt had been living with this uncertainty since March 2012. He said the Peter Brett report had been a sloppy desk job and the information was incorrect. He was particularly concerned at the way the public speakers' comments had been recorded in the minutes of the meeting and would like a full transcript of their statements to be included as was often the case at other council meetings.

Councillor Rolfe said that the minutes should have better reflected the considerable opposition expressed by the large number of speakers. The Chief Executive reminded Members that the minutes were not a transcript of the meeting but a record of the decision and how it was reached. An expression of the degree of opposition in the minutes would require the introduction of subjective judgement and opinion by the minute-taker and would be inappropriate.

Councillor Oliver asked for the following amendments to be made to the minutes in relation to the section on public speaking

- 1 Remove the Chief Executive from the list of officers present
- 2 Correct the spelling of Wicken Bonhunt
- 3 Clarify that Phillip Kratz was retained to represent Arkesden Parish Council
- 4 In relation to the section on site suitability
 - 3rd bullet point – add, the site has '**inadequate** access to services'.
 - 4th bullet point – include 'flooding at the **site entrance**'Include 2 additional issues
 - i) The council's decision on suitability should not depend on the site owner making the case.

- ii) A proposed development for 7 houses in Wicken Bonhunt had been refused on the same grounds that the residents had raised in their objection to the 5 Acre site.

These amendments were agreed and it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2015 be approved with the amendments set out above.

PP22

BUSINESS ARISING

i) Minute PP19 – Braintree Local Plan

In answer to a question from Councillor Harris, officers confirmed that her request had been taken on board and in future local parish councils would be advised of relevant issues in relation to cross boundary developments.

PP23

CALL FOR SITES

Councillor Menell, Mr Coltman and Steven May spoke to this item in the context of the Gypsy and Traveller consultation. Copies and summaries of the statements are set out in the appendix to the minutes.

The Senior Planning Officer presented the report. She explained that a new SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) was required as part of the development of a new Local Plan and the call for sites was the opportunity for landowners to put forward sites which would be available for development in the future. The council was seeking information on sites for commercial development, or residential, which could accommodate 5 or more dwellings. The consultation would last for 8 weeks, after which each site would be assessed and a detailed report presented to a future meeting of the working group. She said that the SCHLAA document would not determine which sites would be allocated but gave background information on availability.

The meeting considered the proposed consultation form and noted the following suggested changes

- The heading to read - Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2015
- Add to Note: no sites in the SHLAA will be automatically carried forward to the new SHLAA.
- In relation to the Transport Assessment more detail was included on the methodology used.
- Criteria for sites – In relation to Gypsy and Travellers, ask for sites which can accommodate 1 or more pitches.

In answer to a question, the working group was informed that the call for sites consultation had been changed from July to April to enable the Local Plan process to continue to move forward. The sites would be assessed by June 2015

and the council would then be in a position to consider the future strategy for the number and distribution of houses. Councillor Barker said that if the call for sites consultation did not take place now, it would have to wait for the new Council in June and Members would then be criticised for delaying the process.

Members were informed that the communication arrangements for the call for sites process would be on the same lines as other Local Plan consultations. Landowners and developers were aware of the requirement for a further call for sites and were waiting for this consultation.

Councillor Dean was concerned at the lack of transparency and communication with Members and public regarding the change of date of this consultation. In relation to the Local Plan timetable, he thought it would be more sensible for the council to first agree a framework for development which would indicate to landowners and developers the general areas and number of dwellings that were being sought. He said this call for sites was premature, as he was not convinced that all issues had been considered and there was a risk of the process failing again.

Councillor Howell said the call for sites was concerned with more than just the Gypsy and Traveller sites. The new Local Plan would require an increased number of houses and the scale of this challenge would affect all communities. He commented that in this respect officers did an extremely difficult job and were not able to defend themselves, so he was saddened at some of the comments made at this meeting. He questioned whether it would ever be possible to propose development that would bring the community with you, as was suggested in relation to the garden development principles. It was questionable whether the 9 principles could be satisfied and the next stage in the Local Plan process would pose a significant challenge to the new council.

The Assistant Director commented that the 9 principles were important when looking at proposed large developments. He confirmed that at this stage no sites had been ruled in or out of the process.

In answer to a question by Councillor Cheetham, it was clarified that the change of date for the call for sites consultation had been confirmed at the February Cabinet meeting.

The working group noted the call for sites form and the suggested amendments.

PP24

SPORTS STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Jane Gray speaking on behalf of the Saffron Walden Skate Group spoke to the meeting expressing concerns that the strategy appeared focussed on established sports whilst there was high participation rates in more informal activities which should also be taken into account. A copy of her comments is attached to these minutes

The working group was informed that the preparation of a sports strategy had been commissioned by UDC and undertaken by Ploszajski Lynch Consulting. The strategy built on the 2012 assessment of open space, sport and recreation needs in the district. The new study would link with a detailed appraisal of local sports needs. The strategy aimed to contribute to the council's aims to improve health and wellbeing and increased participation in sport, to relate facility need to sports development programmes and patterns of participation, and to develop a priority list of deliverable projects to feed into the wider infrastructure planning work.

Tony Ploszajski gave a short presentation on the draft strategy, a Plan for Sports in Uttlesford. The initial findings of the study showed that Uttlesford had one of the highest sports participation rates in the country. In reply to the public speaker's comments he said he was aware that there were many well supported activities which did not necessarily make use of specialist sports facilities and he would see how this could be addressed within the document. The next phase would be to consult on the document and ask for further comments.

The Chairman said the report highlighted the need for facilities in the district, which the council should work to deliver post election. Councillor Davies said it was important to have a good understanding of the current provision. Access to facilities could be improved if sports clubs worked together to find a solution and take forward a bid for S106 funding. Councillor Barker asked if sports groups that met in village halls had been included in the data. She suggested that councils should be working with the schools to get better value to use of the halls and playground facilities.

Councillor Dean asked if Uttlesford's higher than average participation rate could be met from facilities outside of the district. He was advised that in some cases yes, but it should not be assumed that was always an option as these facilities could already be at capacity. The council should also be looking toward future need and infrastructure requirements.

The report was noted.

PP25 **DUTY TO COOPERATE**

The working group received a report on the Duty to Cooperate activities that had occurred since the last meeting.

PP26 **NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

Joanna Francis from Great Chesterford spoke to the meeting about the support that was available for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. A copy of her statement is attached to these minutes.

The working group was informed that since the Localism Act the Council had been working with parishes to support the development of neighbourhood plans and 3 plan area had now been submitted for Felsted Great Dunmow and Saffron

Walden. A consultation was currently underway on the proposed boundary for a plan for Great and Little Chesterford, and in Stansted a steering group had been set up and the submission of a neighbourhood plan area was expected shortly.

The report before members explained how the council intended to support the process going forward. The Cabinet had allocated £100,000 from the Strategic Initiative Fund, which would be held in ring-fenced account and administered by the planning policy team.

The allocated money would be used to obtain independent advice procured on the basis of about 1 day a week which would provide direct professional advice to these groups. The fund would also provide grants to parish/town councils who met certain criteria, to a maximum of £10k per plan.

The Assistant Director replied to the points raised by the public speaker. He said it was not the current approach to have a district council officer on the steering group as there should be clear separation to enable the community to develop its own policy.

Previously the council had provided funding to the RCCE and had facilitated the joining up of Planning Aid with communities to buy in neighbourhood planning experience. As this funding had gone it was now being provided by the council via the Strategic Initiative Fund. The parish councils could access arms-length professional advice, but in relation to questions of policy, meetings would also be arranged with district officers. Once adopted the Neighbourhood Plan would form part of the development plan documents and be interpreted by officers and by Inspectors at appeal. It would be district council's plan that reflected the wishes of the community, as they would vote for it at a referendum.

The Assistant Director said a review of the plan could be considered after a period of five years. With the question of CIL payments, this matter would be revisited during the plan preparation process.

Councillor Dean said the proposals were a good step forward, with the council taking a more supportive role, but the effect on the work load of the policy team should be considered. The Assistant Director said that the steering group for the Great Dunmow Local Plan had appointed a project manager to coordinate the process and he anticipated that other councils could use the grant money in a similar way.

The working group noted the support for the Neighbourhood Development Planning process.

PP27

ECC BUS STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The working group considered the new draft bus strategy, which was currently out for consultation and set out how ECC planned to grow and improve the bus network. The report set out a suggested reply to the consultation questions and members were asked if they had anything further to add.

Councillor Dean said the council's answers to the questions were sensible, but it appeared to be a consultation on how to cut costs and he questioned whether anything positive would come from it. An important initiative should be to encourage more people to use buses, particularly those who also used a car. The Chairman commented that ECC wanted to provide the service but at good value and the rural nature of Uttlesford posed a significant challenge. However, it was good news that the number of people using Uttlesford Community Travel (UCT) was growing and the integration of different services could be a way forward.

Councillor Eden said the UCT had not been recognised in the report but it could be an effective means of providing access in rural areas. However there was a problem with the licensing of bus services that prevented its integration with the main services. He asked officers to keep abreast of any developments in this area.

Other points suggested by members were to look at where there could be public use of school bus service and how duty to cooperate discussions could help to improve cross district services.

The response was AGREED with the addition of the points raised above.

PP28

OTHER BUSINESS

It was agreed that for future meetings public speakers should be asked to provide a transcript of their comments so that it could be appended in full to the minutes.

The meeting ended at 9.40pm

Public statements

Item 2 minutes of the previous meeting

Councillor Menell

Councillor Menell said that following the discussion at minute PP15 members of the public had left feeling reassured and that they had been listened to, only to be told that further information had been requested from the landowner and this would not be available until the 31 March. This meant there was no opportunity for the 5 acre site to be considered at this meeting and it felt like a deliberate attempt to stop the debate. There had been an urgent meeting with the Leader the Chief Executive and residents. She could not understand this delay as information was already available from the Peter Brett study and the Environment agency had commented at that stage. The site was located in a flood zone and it was important to consider the people who would be living there when it had already been stated that a flood response plan would be required for the site. This had been known last November and now the decision on the site had been delayed again.

John May

I am John May, have lived in Arkesden for 23 years and chair the FALCA Steering Group. We have been told time and again that UDC has to follow a process and assured that this process is thorough and will take into account all the evidence.

Councillor Rolfe went to great lengths at your last meeting to reassure everyone that this process would continue but that the 'challenge' to use his word was conflicting evidence and a lack objections from consultees (Essex County Council and the Environment Agency in particular).

Under matters arising I will take up Councillor Rolfe's challenge and shine a light on that thorough process on the two most important criteria for the site were gypsies to live there - no risk from flooding and safe pedestrian access.

Peter Brett Associates told the Environment Agency and Mr Taylor has repeated this unequivocally in his report that the site lies in FZ1 with only the access in FZ3. Our flooding expert asked the EA for information and was told "...there is a small section of FZ2 and FZ3 along Poore Street, towards the East of the site". Publicly available flooding maps show this quite clearly.

Flooding is now accepted as a problem and the site owner has been required to provide mitigation measures. She cannot move the caravans up the hill because that would fail visual and landscaping criteria on which grounds Peter Brett Associates has already rejected out of hand 10 other sites.

So let me show you this picture, taken on one of the THREE occasions in a 12 month period when Five Acres flooded, which shows the area where Mr. Taylor says caravans may be 'discreetly' located.

The EA replied to Brett and I quote “this would place occupants at risk in terms of access and egress”. Where does Mr. Taylor mention to you “Occupants are at risk”? I’m afraid he has misrepresented the flooding issue to you. Has this been a thorough process and I wonder if Councillor Rolfe will now repeat his assurance that no objections have been raised?

Turning to safe pedestrian access. Brett wrote to Essex County Council asking for their views on all sites. There were asked for ‘a short paragraph for each site....relating to your area of expertise only’. The reply came from a lady with and I quote “general comments which apply to all sites” and these general comments are all Mr Taylor has reported to you. She also said “no site visits have been carried out due to time constraints”. Does this sound like thorough to you?

If she had visited the site this is what she might have seen – a narrow Protected Lane with blind bends. Please could you tell me how there can be safe pedestrian access for gypsy children who need to walk along this lane almost a kilometre to catch the once a day bus to their non-existent place at Clavering primary school. Would you let your children do that?

Our evidence has been provided in great detail to you and to the planners. We have in effect done Mr. Taylor’s job for him. Which body of evidence do you think carries more weight?

My aim today is simple. I am asking you to direct the planners to finish the job they started and reach a conclusion on Five Acres. There is nothing to stop this when they hear back from the site owner so let’s not have excuses about elections and new processes. We are not asking for preferential treatment – we just ask for fair treatment. Please make sure we get it.

Steve Coltman

Good evening, my name is Steve Coltman and I am the clerk to Arkesden Parish Council.

The Parish Council and many of the residents who had attended the last meeting of this group are, to put it mildly, extremely disappointed that the whole question of the Gypsy Traveller Consultation, and subsequent Officer’s report, has completely disappeared from the agenda. We are expecting at the very least that there will be some “matter arising”. The issues of site suitability, site visits and the owner’s response, to name but a few, are surely worth some comment from this group.

The minutes blatantly fail to record the huge volume of representations that were made against the way in which the results of the consultation had been presented to this working group. You have just heard from Mr May on how the comments made by the Environment Agency and the Highways Authority have been misrepresented to you, and I would like to give you a further example of this.

The officer’s report, which was “noted” in the minutes states that “Essex County Council Archaeological dept. were consulted during the preparation of the documents and they did not raise any concerns.” However my enquiries with the same dept. brought forward this response: “We were asked by the consultants to do a rapid search on all Heritage Assets that were likely to be affected. Those sites that had no impact we made clear by stating “no impact”. The remainder all had Heritage Assets identified, including Protected Lanes. This will have an impact on the Heritage Asset and should be taken into consideration when considering sites”

So, firstly the officers did not consult directly with the Archaeological dept. but relied on the previously discredited Brett report. Secondly, to say the dept. had “no concerns” was misleading in that they had only been asked to **identify** sites. Thirdly the protection of these lanes is not the responsibility of either the Archaeological dept. or the Highways dept. but is in fact the responsibility of Uttlesford District Council and they have policies in place to do this, as we have repeatedly pointed out to them.

I think you will agree that statements such as “statutory bodies have no objections” are clearly misleading and not representative of the true facts of the matter. I trust that during the imminent “matters arising” you will call into question the integrity of the officers report and that when you finally get round to discussing the suitability of sites, whenever that might be, you will look more closely at the **actual** responses provided in the consultation rather than the officers summary of these.

I would ask that you and your successors deal with all of the issues raised during the consultation at the earliest opportunity with due regard to **all** of the responses given not just a convenient selection as presented by the officers.

Thank you

Joan Morgan

I AM JOAN MORGAN – YOU MAY REMEMBER I AM THE CHAIR OF WICKEN BONHUNT PARISH MEETING – FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE TAKING NOTES - **THAT IS SPELT W.I.C.K.E.N BONHUNT**

I WISH TO ADDRESS THE MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 23RD FEBRUARY 2015 OR TO BE MORE ACCURATE – THE MATTERS **THAT DO NOT** ARISE FROM THE MINUTES OF 23RD FEBRUARY 2015

THE MINUTES STATE THAT THERE WOULD BE SITE VISITS TO THE GYPSY/TRAVELLER SITES BEFORE ANY DECISIONS WERE TAKEN – BUT THERE IS NO MENTION THAT THE SITE VISITS WERE TO BE DELAYED UNTIL JULY 2015

THERE IS NO MENTION THAT THE DECISION ABOUT 5 ACRES WOULD BE DELAYED UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS ON MAY 7TH

THERE IS NO MENTION THAT THE LANDOWNER HAD BEEN GIVEN UNTIL 31ST MARCH (VERY CONVENIENT) TO REPLY TO OUR CONSULTANTS’ REPORTS REGARDING THE FLOODING, SEWAGE DISPOSAL AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES ETC.

THE MINUTES STATE THE OFFICERS HAD LISTENED CAREFULLY TO ALL POINTS RAISED BY RESIDENTS, BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO RE-ASSURE US THAT ISSUES REGARDING PEDESTRIAN SAFETY, POORE LANE PROTECTION AND UNSUSTAINABILITY DUE TO THE LACK OF FACILITIES HAVE BEEN TAKEN SERIOUSLY. THERE IS NO MENTION IN THE MINUTES THAT 7 HOUSES WERE REFUSED PLANNING PERMISSION IN WICKEN LAST YEAR DUE TO EVERY ISSUE THAT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS UNFIT FOR TRAVELLER/GYPY SITES. I CAN ASSURE YOU THE RESIDENTS OF WICKEN AND ARKESDEN TAKE ALL THESE ISSUES VERY SERIOUSLY

THERE IS NO EVIDENCE IN THE MINUTES THAT UDC HAS ANY DESIRE TO REACH A CONCLUSION REGARDING 5 ACRES BEFORE 7TH MAY. A FRESH CALL FOR SITES WILL ONLY BRING THE WHOLE QUESTION OF 5 ACRES BACK ONTO THE AGENDA YET AGAIN, WITH A TOTAL WASTE OF PUBLIC MONEY FOR BOTH RESIDENTS AND THE LANDOWNER ALIKE.

UTTLESFORD HAS FAILED IN THEIR DUTY TO RESIDENTS FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR INCOMPETENT PROCESSES. CONCLUSIONS HAVE BEEN REACHED FOR ALL OTHER SITES – SO WHY NOT 5 ACRES?

FROM THE EVIDENCE THAT HAS BEEN PRODUCED, THERE IS NO REASON WHY 5 ACRES CANNOT BE REMOVED FROM THIS PROCESS AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE AFTER THE ELECTIONS IN MAY. THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN A WEIGHT HANGING AROUND EVERY RESIDENT'S NECK FOR MANY YEARS.

IT NEEDS TO BE RESOLVED **ONCE AND FOR ALL – WHOEVER SITS IN THESE SEATS AFTER 7TH MAY!**

Tina Mclean

Tina Mclean said she was appalled at the minutes. The Assistant Director had spoken at length but it was what he didn't say that was important. There was a lack of transparency in reporting the facts. The community had acted in good faith in response to the consultation. They were now being fobbed off, with the council having hid behind the process. There was no reason to ask for more information by 31 March, and she could not understand why the site was not being decided tonight. The site meetings were not imminent as had been suggested and public opinion had now turned to anger. The community had invested time and money in the consultation and she hoped that a decision would be made in the near future.

Item 4 – call for sites

Councillor Menell

Councillor said that the LDS timetable had been altered and the Gypsy and traveller consultation was now included in the SCHLAA. It appeared that there was inconsistency as it was asking for sites for 5 houses or more, when the working group had agreed that sites with 5 pitches or less would be preferable. She did not want the 5 acres site to be caught in this process and said this site should be determined before any call for sites information was looked at.

She asked questioned what would happen if the requested reports from the landowners consultants was not provided. (*She was advised that the site would not necessarily be rejected but there would need to be a further conversation with the Environment Agency to reconsider the likely impact*).

Steve Coltman

Good evening once again from Arkesden Parish Council

You will have seen from the many emails that have circulated recently that Arkesden Parish Council and residents were dismayed to see the timetable for the new "Call for Sites" brought forward to April 2015 from July 2015, which was the timetable that **this** working group had

approved at its January meeting. I am hoping that Mr Taylor can direct you to “comments made at the Planning Policy Working Group” that led to this change of timetable being presented to Cabinet by Cllrs Barker and Rolfe with the accompanying statement that the timetable had been agreed by the UPPWG.

This timetable is critical in that we were led to believe that no decisions on sites in the current consultation could be made until after the new call for sites had been concluded and this would have led to a long delay in the determination of the site at 5 Acres. However, a flurry of emails late this afternoon have categorically stated that the decision on site suitability will be made by the newly formed UPPWG at the earliest possible date, **and** that this decision will be made **irrespective** of the new call for sites. I would ask for this to be minuted.

Moving on to the Call for Sites form, on which you are being asked to comment – yes that is actual comments not just for noting! This form has been designed for **housing**, and sites put forward will form part of the Strategic **Housing** Land Availability Assessment. The form refers to sites that are suitable for **residential or employment** development and sites that could accommodate 5 or more dwellings. Yet you are being asked to approve this form for houses/caravans/pitches since they are now being dealt with under the one Local Plan. The **only** mention of Gypsy Travellers is (if you look very carefully!) a one line entry under “Current and Potential use” that refers to “Gypsy or Traveller Pitch”

This form is ill thought through with statements such as “No sites will be automatically carried forward”. Does this mean that the sites in the current Gypsy and Traveller consultation such as “Tandans”, “Star Green” and “5 Acres” will have to reapply even before any decisions have been made.? But this form is only suitable for 5 dwellings or more so what will “Tandans” and “Star Green” do, as they are only proposing 2 pitches.

You can see the confusion and this is yet another example of why the Local Plan was rejected originally.

I suggest that your comments on this form should be to strike out the line referring to Gypsy and Traveller pitches and only allow a call for sites for Gypsy Traveller sites when an appropriate form has been prepared and approved – probably in July as originally agreed!

I am, once more, left wondering why you are being asked to comment at such a late stage. Presumably any comments that you do make will have to go to Cabinet for approval and yet this form is due for publication on April 1st – just 36 hrs away, unless of course this is just an April Fool’s Day prank!

Thank you.

John May

I am John May, have lived in Arkesden for 23 years and chair the FALCA Steering Group. We have been told time and again that UDC has to follow a process and assured that this process is thorough and will take into account all the evidence.

Councillor Rolfe went to great lengths at your last meeting to reassure everyone that this process would continue but that the 'challenge' to use his word was conflicting evidence and a lack of objections from consultees (Essex County Council and the Environment Agency in particular).

Under matters arising I will take up Councillor Rolfe's challenge and shine a light on that thorough process on the two most important criteria for the site were gypsies to live there - no risk from flooding and safe pedestrian access.

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Item 5 - Sports Strategy

Jane Gray

IN ANSWER TO THE UDC SPORTS STRATEGY DRAFT DOCUMENT

In 2012 the same consultants were tasked with putting together a sports strategy for Uttlesford, this was recently dismissed as an audit and I would argue that this latest offering is again an audit of sports organisations who use pitches and courts and leisure centres. This is not surprising as the questionnaires that went out to sports groups were only applicable to those that played competitively in leagues and teams and those who trained and played at set times.

This document will be used to justify money from S106 and CIL being used on sporting facilities in the district. The developers will be guided by this document.

There is limited mention of the different health benefits of sport in this document, no ideas on whether one sport gives more health benefits than another, thus saving visits to the local doctor's surgeries. There is no discussion on retention of participants, does your young child try cricket but move onto spending a lifetime practising parkour. How do we attract young female school leavers to participate in physical exercise, could outdoor "green gyms" with nearby cool cappuccino-making facilities advertised on social media help? What about a "trim trail" for walkers, bikers and runners, a multi-use path winding it's way through the new housing estates with outdoor gym equipment at intervals along the way? After the success of the Para-Olympics, I am amazed to see no provision for inclusivity in sport, no mention of sport provision for those who are physically or mentally disabled.

This report concentrates on established clubs who were asked to come up with a wish list for their members. So if you are overweight, disabled, don't make the team or can't afford the membership you are excluded. S106 and CIL should benefit the whole community. There is no mention here of Social Value or Social Return on Investment for the community.

There is no room for innovation in this report, little indication that people's lifestyles have changed, that people need facilities that can be used when they have the time in their busy schedule, that can be accessed every day and evening of the week and not left empty for the majority of time. This could be a list of sports put together in the 1950,s - there is only one mention of Park Runs and nothing about outdoor Bootcamps, both popular currently because they fit in with modern lifestyles and today's media savvy population and can be organised via a phone or internet.

As the secretary of Skate Group, I am hugely disappointed that despite attending the Saffron Walden Organisations for Sport meetings, where, incidentally, I am the only woman present, and meeting with the consultants, the activities that take place at the skatepark have been designated an "informal sport" and placed in the "playground" category.

We have over 800 members. BMXing and skateboarding are recognised as sports by Sport England and we are an open 365 days of the year facility with free access. We cater for all ages and are used by skaters and BMXers in their forties, fifties and even sixties. The main skatepark is not a children's playground. And yet we are labelled an "informal" sport and the report states that it is difficult to plan for "informal" sport provision, I fail to see why this is the case. Why should it be any more difficult to plan for a concrete area than an outdoor bowls green?

I urge you to amend this document before it goes out to consultation to take account of the points I have raised.

The Saffron Walden Skate Group.

Simon Drew from the Saffron Walden boot camp was not able to stay to deliver his statement but he also requested that the Strategy should think beyond traditional sports.

Item 7- Neighbourhood Development Planning

With regards to the sort of help required

The key to keeping the cost down is a 'proportional' evidence base – how do we determine what is proportional?

The key areas that Steering Groups needs assistance with are policy writing and Environmental Impact/Sustainability Appraisals. In many other areas a member of the LPA sits on the Steering Groups. Is this something you intend to do during these periods of the plans?

My biggest problem at the moment is the vast amount of information available but no analysis. What is a 'good' plan? There are 50 adopted plans so there are 50 examples of 'sound' plans but are they any good? As an ex-technical author they seem at least 1/3 too long. There is a lot of repeated information, possibly a lot of unrequired information. How useable will these documents be in practice? Are there any intentions to provide us with examples of good plans?

Will you be pointing steering groups to the documentation already provided by Councils such as Hereford and Wiltshire or producing some of your own?

Free training courses are booked up months in advance. South Cambs organised free training through Planning Aid for their PCs. Is UDC intending to do the same?

Policies still seem to be open to interpretation and appeal. In Cringleford they were allocated 1200 houses on one of the sites by their LP, they wanted a policy of a maximum of 25 dwellings per hectare in their NP to ensure they didn't get more than 1200 on the site and to retain the semi-rural nature of the location, the Inspector said using 'maximum' went against the NPPF and changed it to 'approximately', the LPA approved an application for 28/hectare, which in their view was approximately 25, which took the numbers well over what they wanted – they are NOT happy! The final version of an NP may well not achieve the Steering Groups expectations following examination.

With regards to the new funding

NPs are not appropriate for all communities, a Neighbourhood Development Order or Community Right to Build Order may be more appropriate – will the funds available apply to these as well?

How will the funding criteria work for joint parishes if only one parish provides precept funds but the other provides volunteer hours?

What will we be able to invoice for? Government grants won't cover the cost of manpower unless it is for specialist consultancy services, will yours? Gt Dunmow has employed someone full time for well over a year to help produce their plan.

NPs are supposed to be reviewed every 5 years – who will pay for this?

CIL

NPs are supposed to help make developments come forward quicker but part of the sweetener to communities to do this is the implementation of a CIL policy. Our community proactively brought forward their Local Plan allocations but with the withdrawal of the Local Plan these will now be irrelevant when considerations are made for the new Local Plan and our community feels under threat from the speculative development proposals that will undoubtedly be submitted if there is any drop in the 5 year land supply. We feel we have no choice but to go ahead with an NP. Will proactive councils who take a lead now with NPs find themselves penalised yet again by missing out on possible future CIL funding?

Thank you for letting me speak.