

**PLANNING POLICY WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 26 NOVEMBER 2015 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillor H Rolfe – Chairman
Councillor S Barker, P Davies, A Dean, S Harris, J Lodge, J
Loughlin, A Mills, E Oliver, and J Parry.

Officers in attendance: M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Fox (Planning
Policy Team Leader), M Paine (Planning Policy Team Leader),
A Taylor (Assistant Director Planning and Building Control).

PP34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor S Barker declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of ECC.

PP35 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2015 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to including the apologies from Councillor Loughlin, which had been received after the meeting.

PP36 BUSINESS ARISING

i) Minute PP28 – Issues and Options Consultation

Councillor Dean said that the debate at Full Council on 13 October 2015 had underlined the need for all councillors to be made aware of the reports and issues that had been considered by the working group to enable them to make an informed decision at future council meetings.

ii) Minute PP32 – Assessment of large scale proposals against garden city principles

Councillor Dean said he had attended a recent consultation event in Dunmow where he was aware that the public was still suspicious of decisions being made behind the scenes, particularly in relation to large site proposals. He said that although the current process was more transparent, the council had to regain public trust and it might be appropriate to issue a statement to clarify the position regarding meetings with developers.

**PP37 COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE PLANNING ADVISORY SERVICE REVIEW
OF THE 2014 SUBMISSION LOCAL PLAN**

The working group received the council's proposed response to the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) review of the 2014 submission plan. The Scrutiny

Committee had requested this independent review of the plan preparation process following the withdrawal of the plan after the examination in public in 2014. The response presented the lessons learnt and how these could be incorporated into the process going forward. The response included a clear summary table of the PAS comments and set out future action to be taken.

Councillor Dean, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee welcomed the report and was satisfied that there was a plan to follow through the recommendations.

In order to ensure the successful progression of this process, members felt it was important to ensure that there was comprehensive communication, both external and internal and for frequent workshops to be arranged for UDC members to ensure they fully understood the process.

Action: The next member workshop to explain the criteria for the evaluation of sites to be arranged prior to a future council meeting.

It was clear that there were many aspects involved in the preparation of the plan and Members asked if all these elements were expected to come together in order to meet the plan timetable. It was explained that the target for the preferred options consultation was autumn next year but supportive evidence was required, and this was likely to drive the pace of the process.

In answer to a question, it was clarified that in relation to the transport assessment it was possible to expand the remit if necessary. It would also be possible for the working group to receive the interim results.

In relation to discussion around the Member duty to cooperate meetings, it was explained that each district appointed one representative from the Administration and for Uttlesford this was Councillor Susan Barker. Members said it would be helpful to have an earlier sight of the minutes of both member and officer meetings and to receive a programme of the various meetings taking place.

Action: To circulate a timetable of future duty to cooperate meetings to all members of the working group and ensure that the minutes of these meetings were reported as soon as they were available.

AGREED that the working group support the proposed council response to the independent review of the 2014 Submission Local Plan.

PP38

PREFERRED OPTIONS – GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The working group received a report that set out guidelines for the preferred options consultation, which was the next stage in the local plan preparation. This would involve the council making difficult decisions, particularly in relation to housing allocation. The report explained the requirements set out in the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and set out ten recommendations on how they should be applied. The appendices included

further guidance in relation to balancing the options, the housing trajectory, the duty to cooperate and for considering large scale options.

The working group welcomed the document as a comprehensive reference for delivering the plan. It could be seen as a step to step guide and as such was an important document for all members to have sight of in advance of any decision taken at full council.

Action: To forward the document to all members of the council and consider whether press coverage would be appropriate.

Members discussed the document and raised questions around economic development, green belt issues and site deliverability.

It was explained that in advance of the proposed draft consultation in the autumn there were a number of matters to be considered. These included the report of representations from the recent consultation, the results of the green belt review, the final sieving document, discussion around a new settlement option and initial site assessments. The working group would receive the reports at its meeting and member workshops would also be held during this period.

Members said this was a complex process and it would be useful to understand the various interdependencies.

Action: To circulate a detailed timeline of the key stages and reports to members of the working group.

AGREED that the local plan preferred options: guidance and recommendations, together with the ATLAS guidance on deliverability be noted.

PP39

EVIDENCE BASE AND WORK PROGRAMME

The working group received a report, which updated work on the evidence base and forward work plan. It was noted that the highway consultant had now been appointed. The green belt review had commenced and the stage 1 results would be reported to the December meeting.

PP40

ECONOMIC EVIDENCE – STANSTED SCENARIOS

The working group considered a report on further work commissioned by the council on employment forecasting taking account of expansion plans at Stansted Airport. This would form part of the council's emerging local plan evidence base.

The report provided a district wide projection of employment by sectors up to 2033 based on high (45mppa) and low (35mppa) growth scenarios at Stansted Airport. This took account of the growth based on Manchester

Airport group's sustainable development plan. The expected number of jobs per annum were calculated and distributed across the four authorities.

Public speakers

Mike Young made a statement expressing concern about the figures and assumptions made in the report about the future employment figures, which he believed overstated the position.

Ken McDonald expressed concern about the robustness of the SHMA report, and especially the double counting and overstating of the influence of Stansted Airport on jobs and future housing need. He asked the PPWG to revisit the SHMA report.

A copy of these statements is attached to these minutes.

The Chairman said that the SHMA had been prepared by recognised experts, the figures had been considered and agreed by the working group and were comparable to the number suggested by the Inspector. It was necessary to take account of employment at Stansted Airport and there was no need to redo this work.

The working group was informed that recent growth at the Airport had been above that projected and the sustainable development figures. The study had been prepared based on the airport's assumption but it was using the most up to date figures. The report set out the consultant's professional assessment but it was up to the council to decide how to use the evidence from the study.

Members said there might be some merit in looking at the issues raised by the speakers. In particular, the points raised about the allocation of the number of jobs and houses between the four districts, and also the effect of the Stansted Airport employment projections and their input into the SHMA.

Action: To consider the above issues in relation to the SHMA document at a future meeting of the working group.

AGREED that the working group note the published Stansted Scenarios summary paper and spreadsheet, and their adoption into the local plan.

PP41

DUTY TO COOPERATE UPDATE

Members received an update on the duty to cooperate work. There was a lot of activity in this area with a prolific number of meetings being held with the various partners. In answer to a question, it was explained that the key areas of discussion were generally around the delivery of housing numbers, highways (cross boundary and national), the impact of Stansted Airport, and the impact of each district's distribution strategy, areas of search and site adoption.

There were many discussions taking place in relation to the promoted large sites in the district. This was in order to gather relevant information, which would be available when a decision was taken on which of these sites to take forward in the process. It was not appropriate for these discussions to be in

the public domain at this stage. There were many sites going through this process, which were all being treated in the same way.

The report was noted.

PP42 **HOUSING TRAJECTORY AND FIVE YEAR LAND SUPPLY STATEMENT**

The working group received a report, which updated the Housing Trajectory, and 5-Year Land Supply Statement to take account of the findings of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) published in September 2015 and recent appeal decisions where the Inspector had commented on the 5-year supply issues. It also explained why the council considered that it was only required to apply the standard 5% buffer. It was estimated that the district currently had between 5.1 – 5.3 years of supply depending on the housing target.

Action: recirculate the key housing figures contained within the recent consultation to clarify the number of units still to be identified and planned for.

The report was noted.

PP43 **WASTE STRATEGY ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION – NEWPORT QUARRY**

The working group had considered the consultation on the ECC Waste Replacement Plan in July 2015. During the consultation period, an additional site had been proposed at Newport Quarry and this site was now subject to further consultation.

Member agreed to endorse the officer comments but said that as this was an Essex wide plan it was not necessarily a requirement to have a site within Uttlesford.

Therefore it was AGREED to change the last para to read ' ECC is therefore asked to consider this site in the light of this review and consider if it is more preferable to greenfield sites elsewhere in the county'.

PP44 **ISSUE AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – MINOR AMENDMENTS**

Members received a table of the minor amendments that were made to the Local Plan issues and Options Consultation Document following the Full Council meeting on 13 October 2015.

It was emphasised that all members should have the opportunity to view and make changes to any proposed documents before a decision was taken by Full Council.

PP45

OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman said Martin Paine, the current Planning Policy Team Leader would shortly be leaving the authority and this was his last meeting. The working Group thanked him for the significant contribution he had made during his time at the authority and wished him well in his future career.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

Uttlesford Planning Policy Working Group – Meeting 26 November 2015
Statement by Ken McDonald, 2 Greenfields, Stansted Mountfitchet, CM24 8AH.

Good evening.

My name is Ken McDonald. I am a resident of Stansted Mountfitchet.

I have asked to speak because I **care** about this area and because I would not want Uttlesford District Council to **sleep-walk** into another disastrous Examination in Public.

I have reviewed the "West Essex and East Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment" (the "SHMA") and have a number of areas of concern regarding its robustness - and its conclusion that Uttlesford should plan to build 568 houses per annum. The SHMA is a **key** element of this planning process, but I believe it is not at **all** robust and is likely to come under attack at an Examination in Public, not least for the fact that it **appears** not to have been subjected to any meaningful review by this Working Group **and** has not been consulted upon.

One of my specific concerns is the double counting and overstatement of Stansted Airport's likely influence on jobs and future housing need. The Hardisty Jones figures that you have been invited this evening to note and **adopt** as part of the Local Plan seem to be the **main** source of this overstatement. It seems to be the **primary** justification for the blanket 20% uplift that was applied in the SHMA to arrive at the figure of 568.

I wholeheartedly support the concerns that Mike Young has just expressed. I echo his call for this Policy Working Group not to simply rubber-stamp the Hardisty Jones report, but to challenge it and refer it back. Once you have had an opportunity to **properly** consider it, I am fairly sure you will also see that it is unfounded, unreasonable and gives rise to a completely unnecessary **boost** to the SHMA's housing need projection.

My allocated three minutes is insufficient to outline **all** my areas of concern about the SHMA, but I do ask that you consider the SHMA alongside **my** critique. I have already sent copies to Howard Rolfe, John Lodge and Alan Dean and have additional copies here if anyone would like one.

I probably just have time to mention two of the more **straightforward** areas that concern me in the SHMA – **both** of which seem to require further work and consideration.

Firstly, the SHMA's lack of **evidence** and lack of **audit trail** for its calculations make it **far** from easy to follow. This aspect, **and** the fact that it has not been consulted upon, is unlikely to impress an inspector.

Secondly, the SHMA covers 4 districts, but concludes by **splitting** the overall housing need **between** those 4 districts, requiring Uttlesford to increase its housing stock by no less than **37%**, whilst the other districts are being asked to grow much less - between 16% and 28%. There appears to be **no** explanation for this disparity, so I fail to see how any **serious** reviewer could regard the recommendation as sound.

Statement by Mike Young

PPWG Meeting 26 November 2015

I am asking that this report be withdrawn and a revised version be prepared. The reason for doing so is that it significantly overstates the likely employment growth at Stansted airport.

The report before you is a summary of the more detailed report prepared by the consultants to which I will need to refer, although I appreciate that it is not in your papers.

Basically it appears that the consultants prepared an interim report and were then asked to revise it to take into account the prospect of passenger growth at the airport getting to 45 million by 2033. The consultants state that they were not asked to test the validity of this figure. But they assumed that this level of growth would lead to an extra 10,000 jobs at the airport.

The figures of 45 million passengers and 10,000 jobs are taken from a report produced earlier this year by MAG, the airport's owners. These figures were not a forecast nor a prediction; they were simply used to show a possible scenario indicating how airport growth might affect the local economy.

The figure of 45 million passengers was used as an illustration of what might happen if the airport achieved maximum use of a single runway. However official forecasts of airport growth are available. These are produced regularly by the Department for Transport and more recently by the Airports Commission. These show passenger figures at Stansted of about 27 million in 2033, an increase over present numbers of 5 million rather than 23 million.

Turning now to job growth, airports and airlines are notorious for their optimistic projections. In this case it assumes that a doubling of passenger traffic would lead to an almost doubling of employee numbers.

Actually BAA, the previous owners, in their last planning application did some similar calculations. But they predicted a growth rate at about half of these rates.